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Short and Sweet

A few months back, we announced that, we were preparing to set a clear distinction between player content and DM content, and push all of the latter into *Dungeon*. Well, the future is now. As you might have noticed from the content calendar, this marks the first month that *Dungeon* will begin to carry feature articles, aimed at providing you DMs with the material you need to improve and more easily run your games.

In addition to two adventures this month, we'll also be showcasing a feature from Bruce Cordell describing a city of aboleths, which features some sample aboleth encounters and several new varieties of aboleths. And we're kicking off a new Explore series for Eberron with the city of Fairhaven. If you were a fan of the first two "Explore Airspur" articles in *Dragon* #377 and #378, this article will be right up your alley, the first in a three-part series exploring the capital of Aundair.

But that's enough tour guiding. We're excited by the change, and by this month's content, and we think that this new content plan is a long time coming. There's just one more thing to say on this subject: If you're concerned that you'll see (or have seen) a drop off in the number of individual adventures in *Dungeon*, we hear you. The Scales of War Adventure Path has more to do with that than anything. Each adventure is long. Real long. As we enter the home stretch of the series (the epic tier kicks off next week with "Betrayal at Monadhan"), we have plans in the works for more frequent, shorter adventures. We even have a cool new project launching next month, which is what I really want to talk about here.

Starting with issue #171, we're launching a new series of adventures, each of which will be between one and three encounters, will start at 1st level and gradually inch up through the heroic tier over the first few months. All of the adventures are set in and around a single, geographic feature (a valley), and takes place in a series of caves. If this sounds familiar, it might be because the concept was first explored in the classic *Keep on the Borderlands* adventure. But this isn't your 1st Edition *KotB*. Sure, adventures will often, but not always, have a dungeon focus. The real kicker is that the deeper you travel into the valley, the tougher the caves get. As a result, the characters get to decide how hard they want their adventure to be on a given night, by picking a cave deeper into the valley—or one closer to the mouth of the valley, if they're wussy. We're dropping one of the key components of campaign management—something that has historically been the province of DMs—square in the laps of the players.

We're excited about this because DMs just need to have the list of adventures at hand, show the ever-evolving map of the valley to the players, and ask them to pick a cave. We'll be running at least two of these adventures each month for sometime, until we have several caves detailed at each level through the heroic tier. Maps will be small and encounters varied, so even if you're not using the adventures as written, you'll be able to port them easily into your own adventures. The valley is intended to be dropped directly into any campaign, near any home base you choose, but we'll also have some suggestions of our own on where you could kick these adventures off.

That's not all we've got on the agenda. In the coming months, we'll also be refocusing our adventure efforts in the heroic tier. We're not ignoring you paragon- and epic-campaigning DMs out there, but we know that most of you are still playing heroic campaigns, and we want to make sure you have the tools you need. There's more in the works for *Dungeon*, but you'll have to stick around until next month to see what else is in store.

In the mean time, what kinds of adventures would you like to see? As we move toward more, shorter adventures, do you want to see more city crawls? Wilderness adventures? Horror adventures? Espionage adventures? Something else entirely? Also, what sorts of support articles do you want to see? Let us know at dndinsider@wizards.com!

EPIC
21–30

Betrayal at Monadhan

By David Noonan

An adventure for 21st-level characters

illustrations by Chad King, Empty Room Studio, Jason A. Engle, and Mclean Kendree,

cartography by Mike Schley Sean Macdonald

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"Betrayal is the only truth that sticks."
—Arthur Miller

"Betrayal at Monadhan" is an adventure for five 21st-level characters. By the end of the adventure, the PCs should be midway through 22nd level. This adventure is the sequel to "Tyranny of Souls" in the Scales of War adventure path, and it leads directly to the next adventure: "Grasp of the Mantled Citadel." It also plays well as a standalone and can be adapted for use in your ongoing campaign.

In "Betrayal at Monadhan," the PCs travel to Monadhan, a domain where those who've betrayed their family, friends, god, or nation suffer supernatural imprisonment. While seeking a portal to an even darker realm, the PCs must contend with a grief-mad, undead dragon, its cambion and death giant allies, and the best-known betrayer of all: Kas, whose sword cut off the hand of his god.

Background

Tiamat's black exarch, Mornujhar, has hidden away a ritualist of immense knowledge. The ritualist is in a dark realm, working on a ritual that will bring about Bahamut's doom. The only way to reach the exarch and the ritualist is to travel to Monadhan, the Domain of Betrayal, and pass through a portal there.

Not only does a dark lord—an undead dragon named Arantor—guard the portal, but the denizens of Monadhan cannot leave voluntarily unless they possess the key.

The key would allow passage either back to the world or to Mornujhar's demesne, and it is always the object of greatest betrayal in Monadhan.

Right now, the key and object of great betrayal is the *Sword of Kas*, which is also part of Arantor's hoard. Kas himself has come to Monadhan in search of it, gathering around him a crew of ritually enhanced vampires.

Into this volatile mix step the PCs, who are trying to keep both Kas and Arantor at bay while they journey through Monadhan and use the Sword of Kas to get to Mornujhar. In more than one way, the price of success may be high. The PCs may be forced into betrayals of their own to escape Monadhan, and such betrayals might play into the hands of Vecna himself, who pulls the puppet strings in very subtle ways.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs begin the adventure under the Coalition's protection in Sayre, where they meet an angel of secrets who calls herself Rachaela. Rachaela tells them the tale of Mornujhar and impresses upon them the importance of finding out what the ritualist is up to and stopping it. Rachaela pays the PCs to travel to Monadhan, use the portal leading to the shadowed demiplane of Vaerothim, and confront the ritualist once and for all.

The PCs' trip to Monadhan is complicated by the difficulty of willingly leaving Monadhan, a supernatural prison for traitors and betrayers. To use the portal, the PCs must find Monadhan's key: whatever object in the realm is the most potent symbol of betrayal. They must also defeat Arantor, the dark lord of Monadhan—an undead dragon which guards the portal itself.

The Quests

The climax of the PCs' major quest, Defeating Irfelujhar, occurs in the next adventure, "Grasp of the Mantled Citadel." But a minor quest in this adventure is the first step to completing that one.

Minor Quest—Betray the Betrayer
The PCs double-cross Kas the Betrayer, accepting his aid but then using the Sword of Kas themselves rather than letting it fall into Kas's hands.
Reward: 3,200 XP.

Once in Monadhan, the PCs travel through the jungle and reach the shantytown where most of Monadhan's denizens—a sorry mix of betrayers from all realms and times—live their lives in squalor. The PCs speak to a seer named Sarissa, who reveals that the current key to Monadhan is the Sword of Kas, the artifact that cut off the hand of the god Vecna. The PCs' inquiries put them into conflict with vampires skulking around the shantytown. After several battles, the PCs learn that the vampires are working for Kas himself.

Kas confronts the PCs and offers them a bargain: he will tell the PCs how to defeat the dark lord that guards the portal if the PCs recover the Sword of Kas and turn it over to him. The PCs realize that Kas doesn't know that the sword is also the ticket out of the domain of Monadhan. Kas keeps his part of the bargain and tells the PCs how Arantor's grief and shame over his own horrible crime—the slaughter of a village and the murder of his daughter centuries ago—takes tangible form in the lower cavern of Arantor's lair. Making Arantor's victims come to life will distract and weaken the dark lord enough that the PCs can win the day, recover the sword, and use the portal.

After fighting their way through magical caverns that rearrange themselves, the heroes reach a final showdown with Arantor. They'll need to use their tactical acumen, the power they've acquired thus far, and Kas's advice to defeat the dark lord. Then they must decide whether to betray Kas and keep the sword for themselves so they can use the portal to reach the demiplane of Vaerothim.

The PCs don't know it (yet), but their success is mitigated by the fact that "Rachaela" is actually Niuria, an angel of secrets who serves Vecna. The God of Secrets will be pleased beyond measure if the PCs can betray Kas, giving him a taste of his own medicine and keeping the sword out of his grasp.

SETTING

Other than an introductory skill challenge, this adventure takes place entirely within the Shadowrealm of Monadhan, the Domain of Betrayal. Arantor, the dark lord of Monadhan, inadvertently created the domain centuries ago when, during a war, he slaughtered an entire town of civilians, then murdered his own daughter in an effort to keep his crime a secret. Since Arantor's first betrayal, Monadhan's population has slowly grown as traitors, turncoats, and double-crossers of all stripes have found themselves surrounded by an inexorable mist, then deposited in Monadhan with little chance for escape.

Monadhan appears as a dismal, twisted reflection of the jungle valley where Arantor's original crime took place. Impenetrable mist surrounds the valley on all sides at a distance of a few miles from the valley's edges (impenetrable unless you possess the key of Monadhan, of course). Near the center of the valley is a small rise with a ruined keep atop it and a shantytown at its base. Underneath that keep are the magical caverns where the PCs will ultimately go—caverns that are home to Arantor, the Sword of Kas, and the portal to Vaerothim.

TREASURE

As with previous installments of the Scales of War campaign, "Betrayal at Monadhan" makes use of the parcel system of treasure rewards as described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The characters should accumulate thirteen treasure parcels by the end of the adventure. You can supply these treasures in whatever way you wish, but the following list presents the most likely encounters to bear treasure. During your preparation, assign parcels from those that follow to the encounters in the spaces provided.

Use the players' wish lists to come up with magic items for the first six parcels. Consider saving at least one or two of the highest-level magic items for the end of the adventure, Arantor's dragon hoard. If any PC has fallen behind gear-wise, you can correct that disparity by putting an item or even two items from that wish list in parcels A, B, and C.

Parcel A: _____, S1 (payment advance from "Rachaela").
Parcel B: _____, S1 (payment advance from "Rachaela").
Parcel C: _____, S1 (payment advance from "Rachaela").
Parcel D: _____, T1 (within the seer's hut).
Parcel E: _____, T4 (in the unearthed coffin).
Parcel F: _____, T4 (in the unearthed coffin).
Parcel G: Two *masks of familiar betrayal* worth 65,000 gp each, C5 (hanging next to the rack).
Parcel H: _____, C5 (carried by the huecuva).
Parcel I: tapestries collectively worth 125,000 gp, C6 (on the walls).
Parcel J: _____, C8 (carried by Bahlik Gur).
Parcel K: _____, C8 (carried by Bahlik Gur).
Parcel L: _____, C9 (Arantor's lair).
Parcel M: _____, C9 (Arantor's lair).
Parcel N: _____, C9 (Arantor's lair).
Parcel O: _____, C9 (Arantor's lair).

Based on the guidelines in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, the following parcels can go in the areas above. Consult the wish lists your players gave you for the first eight parcels, making the items appear to be of githyanki manufacture where appropriate.

Parcel 1: Magic item, level 25.
Parcel 2: Magic item, level 25.
Parcel 3: Magic item, level 24.
Parcel 4: Magic item, level 23.
Parcel 5: Magic item, level 23.
Parcel 6: Magic item, level 22.
Parcel 7: 1,000 pp and four articulated dragon models with sapphire scales (worth 15,000 gp each)
Parcel 8: 1,100 pp.
Parcel 9: 700 pp and a pouch with 5,000 gp worth of residuum.
Parcel 10: 500 pp and a *potion of recovery*.
Parcel 11: Three golden monkey statuettes (worth 10,000 gp each), one 5,000 gp ruby, and three *potions of vitality*.
Parcel 12: Seven 5,000 gp jacinths.
Parcel 13: Three platinum rings with inset diamonds (worth 7,500 gp each) and 2,500 gp.

Preparing for Adventure

This may be your D&D group's first foray into epic-tier play. For you, the shift from 20th to 21st level should be a smooth one. You'll find that the monsters are no more complex than the ones you're accustomed to. You'll do a little more mental arithmetic simply because the numbers are bigger, but otherwise, the transition to epic tier doesn't change what's going on behind your DM screen very much.

While it's a small step for you, it's more of a leap for your players, who have new powers and a whole new epic destiny to deal with. At first, they may need help from the arbiter at the table and an expert at D&D: you. (Yes, if you're running this adventure, you can call yourself a D&D expert. Congratulations!) Take a look at the PCs' new powers and abilities so you can adjudicate them efficiently and quickly at the table. Because you see everything that's going on, you often have a good vantage point to spot those "teachable moments."

You have an ulterior motive for checking out those new abilities, of course: All that new complexity the players get at epic tier is eventually going to get focused on the monsters and machinations you set up for the rest of Scales of War, and perhaps beyond. Knowing what the heroes are capable of with their rituals, magic items, powers, and abilities prepares you to keep them challenged and to keep the action moving. (Challenging the characters is different from thwarting them, of course.)

The most important thing you can do before each session is to spend a few minutes reviewing each encounter that the players are likely to reach during that session.

What You Need to Play

This adventure contains everything you need to play, including background information, setup, encounters and maps. You might wish to review any appropriate Dungeons & Dragons 4th Edition rules before play begins.

The most important thing you can do before each session is to spend a few minutes reviewing each encounter that the players are likely to reach during that session. That should re-familiarize you with monster abilities and tactics and a sense of what other rules (typically those related to skills or terrain) will come into play. Don't try to commit the monsters to memory in the minutes leading up to the session's start. You're just planting the seed in your brain so that when you see the encounter later, you say to yourself, "I remember *these* guys."

What is an Adventure Path?

An adventure path is a connected series of adventures that comprises an entire D&D campaign, from the heroes' humble beginnings at 1st level to their epic triumphs at the pinnacle of level 30. These adventures cover all three tiers of play: heroic, paragon, and epic. Each tier is covered by roughly six adventures, meaning that the entire adventure path consists of eighteen adventures. Each adventure covers from one to three levels, but you can also have the PCs undertake side quests to supplement their XP. This assures that the PCs are the correct level to tackle each adventure.

"Betrayal at Monadhan" is the first adventure in the epic tier, so it starts revealing to the PCs the enormity of Tiamat's evil. The heroes will spend this adventure and its sequel, "Grasp of the Mantled Citadel," beyond the Coalition's call. That 30th-level climax is looming closer and closer. A classic villain from D&D history, Kas the Betrayer, makes an appearance here, and the PCs may very well finish this adventure with a full-fledged artifact, the Sword of Kas, within their (literal) grasp.

Adapting the Adventure

"Betrayal at Monadhan" is designed with five PCs in mind. You can adapt the adventure for larger groups by adding additional treasure parcels and monsters using the guidelines presented in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. When adapting the scenario for larger groups, bear in mind that the second half of the adventure takes place in caverns—expansive caverns, but caverns nonetheless. Make sure any monsters you add will fit inside the caverns while giving PCs and monsters alike enough room to move around.

You don't need to increase the number of monsters. You can instead increase the levels of those creatures using the guidelines on page 174 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Because the upper caverns rearrange themselves anyway, you can certainly make the caverns larger without worrying that they'll encroach on other chambers.

This adventure is designed for characters starting at 21st level, but a larger group of lower-level characters should have no problem with these challenges. The party can tackle the challenges of Monadhan at their own pace. Your only concern should be that the heroes are unlikely to want to fight Kas after encounter T4 (which follows on the heels of at least two and maybe as many as four tough encounters), and that the PCs aren't running on fumes when they reach the climax at encounter C9. If you're worried about the level disparity, Monadhan has plenty of opportunities for leveling up. The wilderness trek to the shantytown can have more than two encounters (and who knows what ancient mysteries are in that jungle, cast into the Shadowfell by Arantor's great betrayal?)

Mask of Familiar Betrayal

Exquisitly crafted from nearly paper-thin marble and bound in delicate golden frames, these masks are minor magic items that have almost no game effect. When worn, the wearer can choose an adjacent creature. Until the wearer ends the effect or moves away from the creature, he or she can choose to appear as an exact likeness of the target creature's great love or a close family member.

Because the mask works only when adjacent to the target and only for that target, the mask of familiar betrayal has limited use for espionage and other subterfuge. The mask is commonly employed by torturers to break the spirit of their victims by making it seem as if someone they love is hurting them, by prostitutes offering the simulation of a lost love, or by bored nobles with money to burn who seek entertainment in the deception of their fellows.

The masks have little value as magic items for an adventurer, but they are also always made of incredible and expensive materials. A typical mask (including the masks found in this adventure) is worth 65,000 gp.

Part 1: Onward from Sayre

Part 1 of this adventure is a short skill challenge to provide some exposition and set the PCs in motion. It also introduces an NPC that will appear in later installments in the Scales of War adventure path

Onward from Sayre Encounters

Before the PCs do anything else, make sure that they're rested, they've done any shopping, and that they're in a state of general readiness. They'll have opportunities to engage in commerce, research, and rituals at other points in the adventure, but there's no point in setting up the adventure, then having the players respond with, "OK, but let's go shopping first."

S1: On the Side of the Angels

This encounter starts with a Coalition man-at-arms approaching the PCs and inviting them to a conference chamber "at their earliest convenience." If pressed, every other word out of the man-at-arms's mouth is that he's only the messenger, etc., but that there's a Rachaela—"some sort of diplomat, I think, and an *angel*"—that wants to speak to them.

Skill Challenge: On the Side of the Angels (page 18).

Monadhan

Monadhan, once a simple jungle valley whose location in the world is lost to history, is now the name of the Domain of Betrayal within the Shadowfell. The sigil sequence to travel there with Planar Portal is esoteric (Arcana DC 30) to discover through research, but it's not secret per se. It's that no one goes there via Planar Portal and similar rituals because they can't bring you back out again. More information on Monadhan can be found in the "Domains of Dread: Monadhan" article from *Dragon* #378.

The vast majority of Monadhan's residents didn't use any ritual to get there. They betrayed someone—perhaps a spouse, parent, superior officer, priest, or liege. Some got away with their betrayals, and some didn't. But afterward (sometimes days or weeks afterward), the betrayer wound up ensnared in fog that seemed to arise from nowhere. The fog grew thicker and thicker, then a warm breeze blew it away...leaving the betrayer on the edge of Monadhan with impenetrable fog behind and a teeming jungle in front.

The unearthly fog, impenetrable to the eye, suddenly parts, and you find yourself standing atop a fog-capped hill. Similar hills surround a jungle valley that stretches before you. To the north, a massive waterfall feeds a river winding a serpentine path across the valley floor.

In the middle of the valley is a low rise, more a barren hump than an actual hill. You can just make out the straight edges of defensive walls near the top. Tendrils of smoke rise from what must be chimneys or campfires nearby.

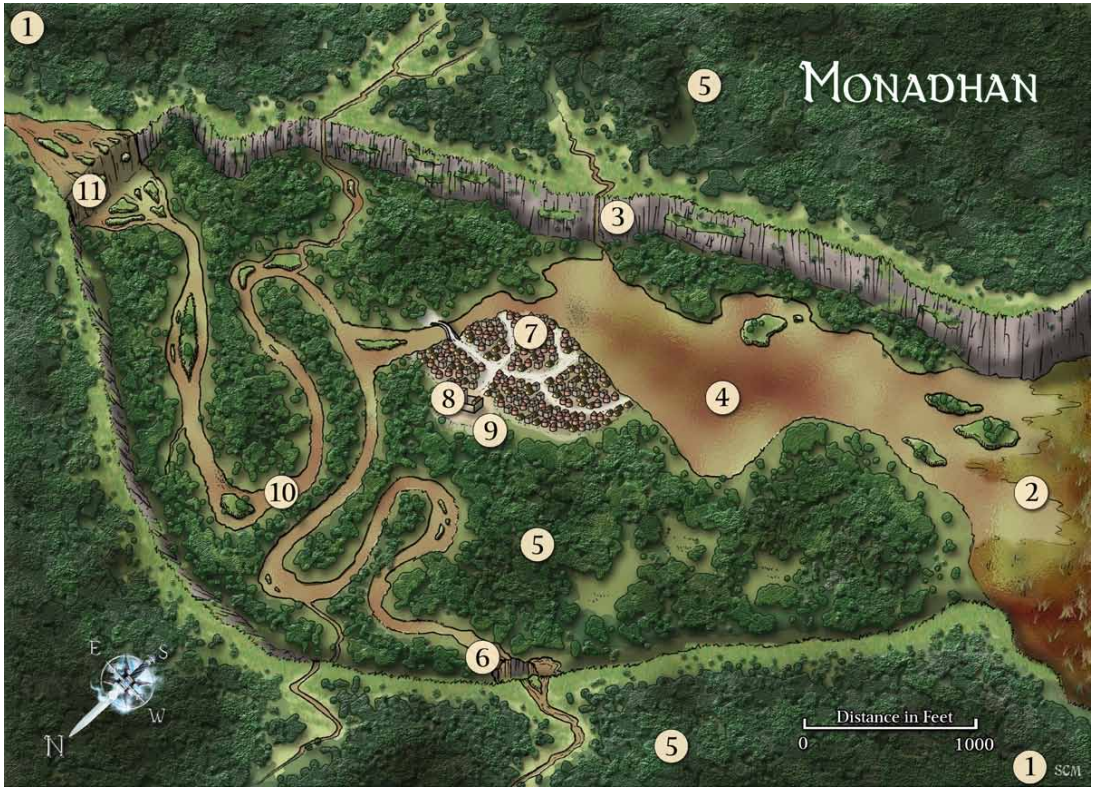
Closer to you, what looks like a thin, tenuous footpath winds its way along the low ridge, just inside the fog line. A wider path heads downhill, into the jungle and in the approximate direction of that hump near the center of the valley.

The characters' first thought may be to just turn around and walk back through the fog to wherever they came from. Unless they have the Sword of Kas, this won't work. Instead, they stumble through the fog for several minutes, then emerge at another random spot on the rim of the Monadhan foothills, almost indistinguishable from where they first arrived.

Monadhan's Properties

With no day or night to speak of, time takes on an indeterminate quality in Monadhan, and no one seems to age. That doesn't necessarily mean that the domain somehow suspends the aging process. Few Monadhan residents would grow to a ripe old age in a community where everyone has already betrayed someone and is suffering supernatural punishment for it. Occasionally a Monadhan resident will die suddenly during exertion or even sleep—"it was as if his own heart betrayed him," the old ladies cluck as they rifle through the corpse's pockets.

Monadhan's other properties are better understood by residents of the domain. Because hardly anyone ever escapes Monadhan, academic records on the following phenomena are scant (Arcana DC 35 to know either, and even then the documentation is fragmentary).



The Sting of Betrayal: Because the domain of Monadhan is suffused with betrayal, the domain itself rewards those willing to hurt their friends. If a creature makes an attack that damages an ally—a friendly fire incident, in other words—two things immediately happen.

First, the ally takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends) in addition to whatever damage the attack itself dealt.

Second, the creature who made the attack gets its choice of either regeneration 5 or a +1 bonus on attacks. Either effect lasts until the ally makes its saving throw.

A creature can benefit from the sting of betrayal only once per round, so an area attack that damages multiple allies earns the attacker only one regeneration 5 or one +1 bonus on attacks.

For the sting of betrayal to function, the creature making the attack and the ally must begin the battle as allies by any reasonable definition, not merely neutral parties who find common cause against a foe or other allies of convenience.

The Blurted Confession: Monadhan's longer-term residents are traitors who have spent years scrabbling for their very existence in an environment full of other desperate traitors. Accordingly, many have internalized their betrayals and buried them deep within their psyches. At the moment of death or great trauma, many blurt out a final confession—often admitting the betrayal that consigned them to their fate in Monadhan.

When a monster dies during this adventure, have it deliver a sentence or two of confession referencing some act of betrayal. Such a confession might be:

- Military: "I left Olaf to die;" "We burned our tunics, then joined the refugees;" "We told the prisoners we'd guard them, but then we got so hungry..."
- Political: "I poisoned the Count so I could marry the Countess;" "I swore that Morrin was pilfering from the treasury alone, but really it was both of us..."
- Religious: "I swore I'd bury him near the chapel, but they wanted too much recompense;" "When they asked if I'd convert, of course I said yes..."
- Familial: "Jorrek isn't really the father;" "Uncle was going to split the farmland, but then Laria leaned too far over the well..."
- Romantic: "Of course I told her I loved her;" "No one knew about the maiden in the tower..."
- Innocuous: "It was I who took the master's monocle;" "I sometimes caught seven fish, rather than the six we were allowed..."
- Cryptic: "I told her to go first;" "There were three torches after all;" "The fingernails are underneath the rug..."

If you have some committed actors at your table, encourage them to blurt out a confession of some sort if they're knocked unconscious, stunned, or take a lot of damage from a single attack. The blurted confession can be a good way for a player to get across a character's shady past, old regrets, or other aspects of a personal backstory that otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity to surface.

The Jungle

It takes two days of walking through winding jungle paths to reach Monadhan's shantytown and the second part of the adventure. If the PCs want to use overland flight or other means to short-circuit the journey, let them. They're missing out on two basic combat encounters and the chance to take their epic powers on a test run, but there aren't any major plot implications for doing so.

W1: The Eight of Us Say Welcome

A hydra arises from the shallow pool where it's been sleeping to menace the PCs.

Tactical Encounter: The Eight of Us Say Welcome (page 20).

W2: The Death Giant's Pet

The PCs find a more direct path to the Monadhan shantytown, only to meet a death giant and his pet chuul patrolling it.

It's possible that the PCs will try to capture the death giant rather than killing him outright. If they succeed, you have two choices: run an impromptu skill challenge to cover the interrogation, or have the death giant "betray" the PCs and tell them all he knows only to switch back to Arantor's side when it's most inconvenient for the PCs or dramatic for the story.

From a captured death giant, the PCs can learn that Arantor lives in the lowermost of "magic caves" beneath the ruined keep, and he never leaves his lair. He's served by many death giants along with some cambions and a few rakshasas. The death giant is in the dark about Arantor's history, his weaknesses, or his ultimate aims. Even among the death giants, this particular fellow is ill-informed because he's always out in the jungle with his pet chuul, not in the caves or the shantytown with the other death giants.

Tactical Encounter: The Death Giant's Pet (page 21).

Part 2: Shantytown

The PCs reach the shantytown at the center of Monadhan without too much trouble. Once there, they must interact with the Shantytown residents in an effort to learn where the portal onward is.

This part of the adventure is intentionally free-form. Some D&D groups will relish the opportunity to investigate a community where everyone has a darkly fascinating, betrayal-laden past. Others will want to make a quick Streetwise check or two and keep all that conversation abstract. Either approach is fine; it's just a matter of knowing the preference of the players at your table.

The simplest way to proceed is for PCs to make DC 22 Streetwise checks. The first success reveals the Sarissa clue below, and the second success reveals the Rolain clue below.

If you want to expand the investigation, here are some factors to consider:

- The PCs are epic tier, and the vast majority of the shantytown residents aren't. Other than Kas's crew (described in encounters T1-T3) and the death giant patrols that occasionally come through the shantytown (use the giants in encounter C7 if you like), no one is capable of even scratching the characters' armor, much less offering an actual challenge in battle.
- No one gets to Monadhan without first committing a betrayal so cruel that it garnered supernatural imprisonment as a response. Most of the shantytown's residents are damaged goods: insane, depressed, paranoid, or habitually blaming everyone but themselves for their fate. Some are wracked with guilt while others deny that they did anything to deserve their fate. Either way, few are pleasant to be around.

Whether you play out a detailed investigation or not, all this effort should get the PCs two valuable pieces of information:

- Sarissa the seer knows about the portal. She lives in a hut on the edge of the shantytown.
- A mysterious figure named Rolain can supposedly go into Arantor's lair and emerge alive. (It's actually Kas, not Rolain, that can do this, but the denizens of the shantytown don't know that.) Rolain can be found at midnight at the shantytown's graveyard.

With these two clues in hand, it's likely that the PCs will visit Sarissa first, because they can do so at any time (Rolain appears at only midnight). While the PCs are learning all of this, Kas's crew of vampires is learning about them, which leads into the encounters that follow.

T1: Seer's Hut

Compared to most of the shantytown's residents, Sarissa is relatively pleasant. She says that she'll answer questions for a hundred gold coins each, an amount that should be a pittance for the heroes at this point but is a fortune for her.

Sarissa explains that Arantor, the dark lord who rules Monadhan, hasn't been seen in years. She doesn't know how to reach his lair. She knows that Arantor guards a dark portal that leads onward from Monadhan, but she doesn't know where it goes. She volunteers that whether the PCs want to depart Monadhan through the mists or through the portal, they'll need the key of Monadhan: whatever object within the domain is most representative of betrayal. Those who depart take the key with them, so the exact nature of the key changes. After staring into her fire for a moment, Sarissa says that the current key to Monadhan is the Sword of Kas.

If the PCs have never heard of Kas, Sarissa can provide some basic exposition: Kas was once a trusted lieutenant of Vecna's, but Kas betrayed Vecna and cut off Vecna's hand, then escaped. Both Vecna's dismembered hand and the Sword of Kas are now artifacts, and Vecna is still chasing after Kas, eager for revenge.

As soon as Sarissa tells the PCs about the key to Monadhan, the vampires attack.

Tactical Encounter: Seer's Hut (page 23).

T2: Shantytown

A figure that flees from the seer's hut at the end of that fight draws the characters back into the heart of the shantytown. (The callophage vampire is the best choice, but a spy minion of Kas will do just as well.) There they meet more of Kas's crew, including Gwenth, a powerful vampire.

Tactical Encounter: T2: Shantytown (page 25).

T3: Graveyard

The PCs seek out the mysterious Rolain, only to learn (probably as they're fighting him) that he too works for Kas.

Tactical Encounter: Graveyard (page 27).

T4: Desecrated Graveyard

When the PCs defeat Rolain, the graveyard itself comes alive and attacks. Sometimes the PCs never get an even break.

Tactical Encounter: Desecrated Graveyard (page 29).

Talking to Kas

Kas himself arrives at the graveyard after encounter T4. He doesn't want to fight; he's looking to make a deal.

Kas's offer is simple: He will reveal the dragon lord's weakness if the adventurers retrieve his sword and return it to him. Kas might—*might*—be able to beat Arantor, but he can't fight while dealing with the magic of the lower cavern (the skill challenge, in other words). The PCs, on the other hand, can do both simultaneously.

The characters are probably in no condition to fight Kas immediately after their encounters with Rolain and the denizens of the graveyard. If they do, he'll happily trade blows with them; his stat block is on page 55. But Kas is not interested in killing them, at least not yet, and he's still amenable to a deal when the PCs realize that a level 26 solo soldier is a tough nut to crack.

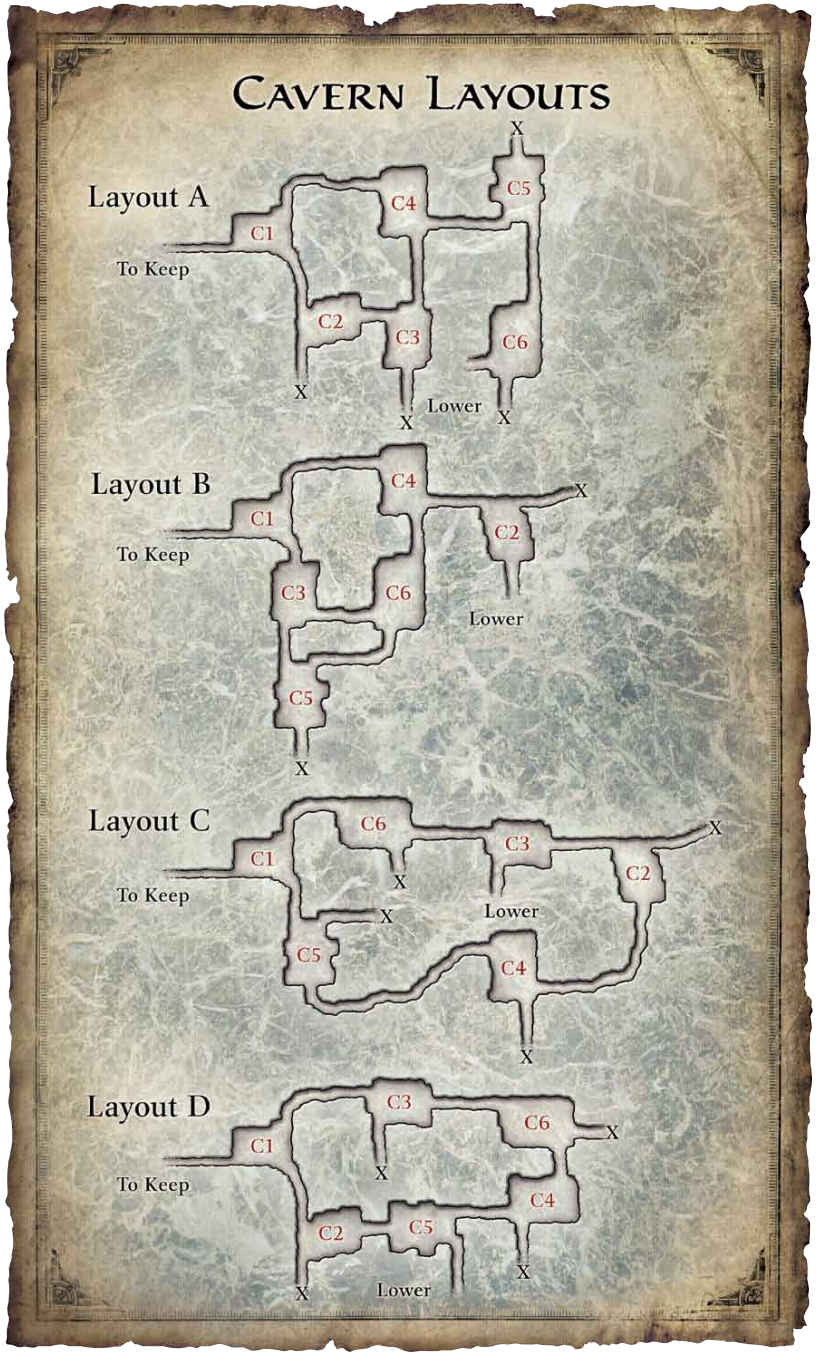
Once the PCs agree to Kas's offer, or at least engage in sincere negotiation, Kas tells an abbreviated version of Arantor's story:

Arantor was a silver dragon who fought bravely in the war between the dragonborn and the tieflings, many centuries ago. He attacked the town of Monadhan, not realizing it was full of civilians. Mad with grief and shame, he tried to cover up his crime, but his own daughter confronted him. Arantor murdered his daughter to protect his guilt, and thus the Domain of Betrayal was born.

Now Arantor spends all his time in the lowest depths of the caves beneath the shantytown. His betrayal was so heinous that parts of his past come to life periodically in the lair...just to torment Arantor, I think. If you find a way to insinuate yourself into those illusions of the past, Arantor's grief and shame will weaken him. Use the word "Imrissa"—that was the name of Arantor's daughter.

But beware! Death giants and undead guardians stand watch in the upper chambers. Simply becoming lost down there is a constant danger. The walls themselves can betray you...

What Kas doesn't know (but the PCs should) is that the sword itself is the key, making it the only way anyone can get out of Monadhan. At this point, the seed of betrayal has been planted. For the PCs to complete their mission, they must break their deal and betray Kas the Betrayer.



Part 3: Caverns

Now the PCs have reached the meat of the adventure: a series of linked caves with the dark lord Arantor at the bottom. They'll fight through the death giants, cambions, and other followers of Arantor as they descend further and further. The shifting nature of the caves makes retreat more difficult, and unlike the vampires in the shantytown, these monsters have had years to hone their tactics against intruders.

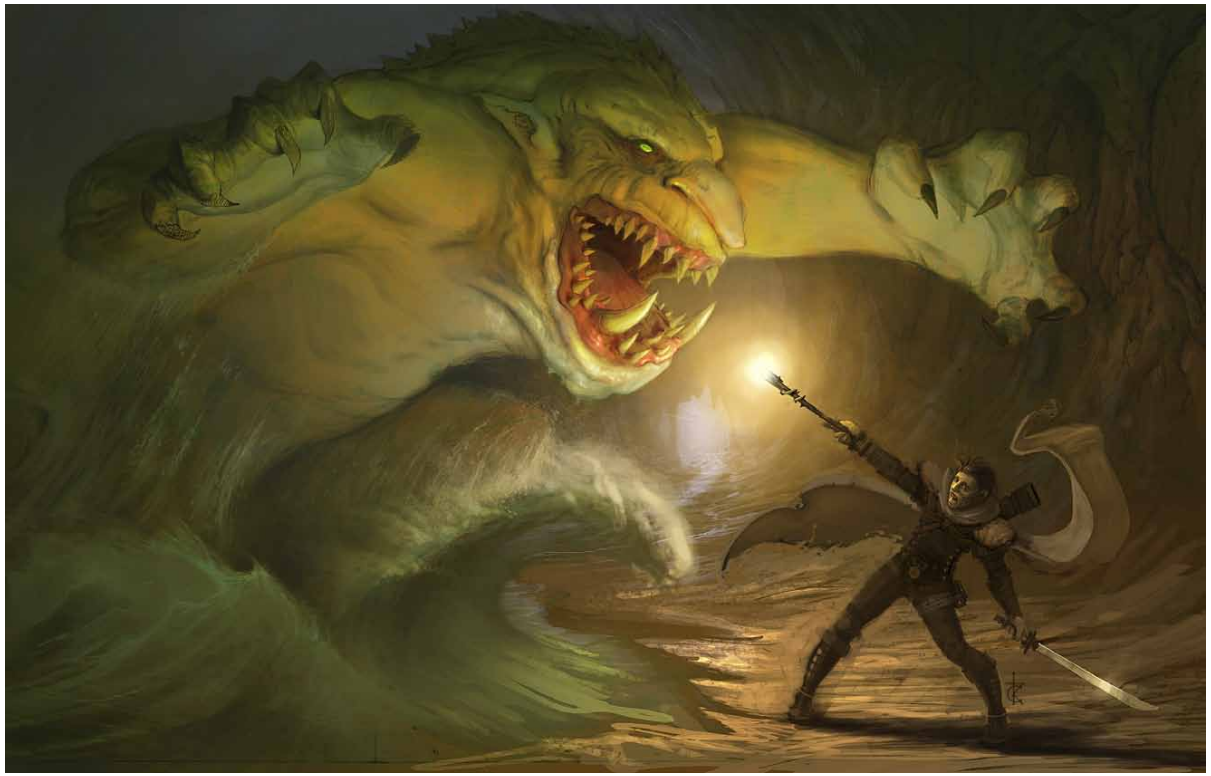
Eventually, the PCs reach the lowest cavern, where Arantor himself makes his lair. If they can slay the undead dragon—a task involving a simultaneous skill challenge and a to-the-death combat—they can win the sword of Kas for themselves and earn their ticket out of Monadhan and onward to Vaerothim.

The Shifting Caves

The six chambers that comprise the upper part of the chamber are near the heart of Arantor's domain, and thus they express betrayal in an unusual way: The winding passages that connect the six chambers change every few hours. In other words, the map itself will betray the characters after a few encounters.

At first, the six chambers are arranged in layout A, with winding, 20-foot-wide tunnels connecting them. The tunnels curve and descend enough that PCs can never see more than 20 squares in front or behind them. Each tunnel is about a quarter mile long. Each X in the layout is a dead end—a 10-square by 10-square chamber devoid of monsters or treasure.

Whenever the PCs take an extended rest or reach a dead end, the layout of the caves shifts to one of the three alternatives. Either roll randomly or choose the layout that delivers the best drama. The PCs don't notice the shift when it happens, but a DC 25 Dungeoneering check should tell them that any tunnel they've recently walked down is subtly different now. PCs can identify the direction of the Chamber of Rivers (C1) from any adjacent chamber with a DC 30 Perception check to hear the running water.



The shifting caves aren't intended to be a head-scratching puzzle. There are only four possible configurations after all, and nobody at the table is having fun if the PCs wander through empty cave after empty cave. You want to use the shifting configuration of the caves for two reasons. First, you want it to shake the PCs up a bit and remind them that in Monadhan, they can't take anything for granted. Second, it's an opportunity to make sure that PCs experience most if not all of the upper caverns while still giving them the freedom of choice that they so cherish. At the point where the shifting caves become an impediment to gameplay, dispense with the shifting and get the PCs down to the lower cavern.

The shifting caves also contribute to the likelihood that the PCs will occasionally backtrack. When they do, spring encounter C7, then C8 on them. You can delay those encounters according to your sense of pacing, but make sure that the PCs have had both death giant encounters by the time they reach the lower cavern.

The denizens of the caves have to deal with their shifting nature as well (everyone but Arantor does), but they're used to it by now—"Of course the walls betray us ... doesn't everything?" they say. As a practical matter, few of them leave their chambers. The death giants trying to visit Arantor just accept that they'll have to wander around for a while before finding the tunnel that leads to the lower cavern, and after they've visited a few rooms, they know which layout they're dealing with.

Resting in the Caves

It's likely that PCs will need to take an extended rest during their exploration of the upper caves, and the shifting caves may make them reluctant to ascend all the way to the surface. They can camp in the dead ends or in a chamber they've already cleared. If they do, a death giant patrol (first C7, then C8) arrives 1d4 hours after they start resting.

C1: Cavern of Rivers

This chamber—always the one closest to the surface—is where the PCs think they're fighting a dark naga and some cambions. Then they are surprised by a fell troll that surfaces from underneath the waterfall.

Tactical Encounter: Cavern of Rivers (page 31).

C2: Cavern of Cliffs

Flight is at a premium when PCs contend with flying devils in a room with many plateaus—and lots of sheer cliffs to push one's foes from. The devils were caught in a double-cross between archdevils and found themselves in Monadhan for their betrayal. They believe that their sentence will be over soon and that they'll somehow be restored back to the Nine Hells. In the meantime, they've sold their services to Arantor in a feudal arrangement—protection in exchange for service.

Tactical Encounter: Cavern of Cliffs (page 34).

C3: Cavern of Sulfur

This encounter features undead that Arantor ritually created shortly after awaking in Monadhan.

The undead are oblivious to the chamber's greatest danger: toxic fumes that erupt from geysers in the floor and poison the living.

Tactical Encounter: Cavern of Sulfur (page 37).

C4: Cavern of Air

The rest of Arantor's undead minions call this chamber, full of floating rock platforms, their home. Like encounter C2, it rewards PCs who can fly and punishes those who aren't quick enough to get from platform to platform before they break apart.

Tactical Encounter: Cavern of Air (page 39).

C5: Cavern of Truth

Rakshasa mercenaries with a history of double-crossing their employers live in this chamber and torture the "informants" that the death giants occasionally drag down from the shantytown. Arantor pays them well, and they're a little reluctant to double-cross him—yet.

If you need to introduce a new PC to the adventure (either because you have a new player or because a PC died and wasn't raised), the jail cells in this chamber are a good place to do so. The existing heroes can "rescue" the new PC, and the new PC should quickly realize that the other PCs are the best way out of Monadhan. Have the new character figure out what betrayal resulted in a one-way trip to Monadhan. If the player is reluctant to play someone known for betrayal, you can posit some arcane experiment gone awry to explain the new PCs' presence—or suggest an NPC that, when viewed through the players' eyes, *deserved* betrayal.

This cavern also has an NPC, Macaebus, whom the PCs can rescue. Macaebus is just a frightened resident of the shantytown now, and he was once a castellan of the exchequer who appropriated his lord's funds to his lord's rivals. Macaebus is a "last chance exposition" NPC. If the PCs have somehow missed key information (like the basics of Arantor's history or the fact that you need an object of great betrayal to leave Monadhan), Macaebus can provide it. He's a noncombatant, but that doesn't mean he doesn't possess useful information. And if your table favors a number of social encounters, you can make the information exchange with Macaebus into a full-blown skill challenge.

Tactical Encounter: Cavern of Truth (page 42).

C6: Cavern of Statues

This chamber is the only one of the upper chambers that Arantor regularly visits—and he comes here only once every few months. More cambions stand guard here, and the PCs may find some clues of use in the next adventure: "Grasp of the Mantled Citadel."

Tactical Encounter: Cavern of Statues (page 45).

C7: Death Giant Reinforcements

This encounter isn't tied to a specific location—it's a patrol of the death giants that Arantor trusts to handle the day-to-day rulership of the shantytown and the jungles of Monadhan. The encounter doesn't depend on the specific terrain in the chamber—though the giants know the caverns well enough to use whatever advantage they can get—so you can spring this on the PCs whenever you like.

Tactical Encounter: Death Giant Reinforcements (page 48).

C8: Death Giant Boss

Once the PCs rest or backtrack again after dealing with encounter C7, you can use this encounter. Now the heroes have roused the ire of the death giant boss, Bahlik Gur, and his retinue. Like the previous death giant encounter, this one isn't tied to any specific location—use it whenever the PCs *think* they're going someplace safe, such as an already-cleared chamber or a dead end.

Tactical Encounter: Death Giant Boss (page 50).

C9: Lower Cavern

This encounter, the climax of "Betrayal at Monadhan," pits the PCs against Arantor himself. Arantor is a level 25 solo, but if the PCs can somehow simultaneously fight Arantor and perform a skill challenge to get the ghosts of Arantor's past to haunt him anew, the fight becomes easier. You can deliver a satisfying conclusion to the adventure if you apply enough pressure that the players feel like they're being stretched thin—not quite enough characters for the fight and not quite enough for the skill challenge.

When this encounter is over, the PCs will negotiate with Kas as described in the Aftermath section (page 17), or possibly fight him, if they provoke him enough, before heading through the portal to Vaerothim.

Tactical Encounter: Lower Cavern (page 52).

Aftermath

Once Arantor falls and the PCs obtain the Sword of Kas, it's time for them to head through the portal and on to the next adventure: "Grasp of the Mantled Citadel." First, though, they'll "betray" Kas the Betrayer himself.

Confrontation with Kas

As mentioned in encounter C9, Kas appears at the entrance to the lower cavern shortly after one of the

PCs takes the Sword of Kas from Arantor's hoard. Time Kas's appearance so that the PCs are closer to the portal than Kas is. It's not entirely fair to put a level 26 solo between the PCs and safety—especially after they just fought a level 25 solo.

Kas isn't exactly a creature of subtlety. He wants his sword, he wants it now, and no wet-behind-the-ears mortal interlopers are going to keep it from him.

"We have our bargain, mortals!" Kas says. "Surrender my sword to me now, and I may ... may ... let you ascend to the surface."

In the likely event the PCs don't immediately hand over the sword, Kas gets angrier. His desire to be reunited with his sword is clouding his judgment, so he's being neither diplomatic nor particularly clever in his handling of the situation.

"Fools! You are mere worms; I could take that sword from you, then bathe it in your blood. You cannot betray me! That's .. unthinkable folly!"

Then Kas jumps down from the ledge and starts walking toward the PCs, but he does so slowly. All the while, he talks about the dark things he and his sword will accomplish if reunited. Improvise here, but watch that Kas doesn't slip into Gollumesque "my precious" parody.

"Give me my sword, for I have dark designs that extend beyond this dreary prison. All that you've seen so far is prologue. Give it to me, and I'll let you live long enough to see my triumph!"

Make sure that the PCs have ample time to gather Arantor's treasure and any fallen comrades. If they move toward the portal, that's good—Kas certainly makes no move to stop them. He's focused totally on obtaining the sword and doesn't realize that he's practically goading the characters to abscond with it. Only when the first PC disappears through the portal will Kas realize what's happened.

"No! You cannot leave with my sword! The betrayer cannot be betrayed! Come back, you fools!"

If Things Go Off Track

The most likely course of events is that the PCs banter a bit with Kas, then head through the portal and on to the next adventure. But players are delightfully unpredictable—and that's a good thing.

The PCs Fight Kas: If this looks inevitable, roll initiative and get on with it. The PCs have had a short rest, but a battle with Kas comes on the heels of the battle with Arantor. Maneuver Kas so that the PCs can change their minds and flee through the portal if they're overmatched, but otherwise don't pull punches with Kas. He's a soldier, so he's durable but less likely to deal high spikes of damage.

If the PCs win, they can go through the portal at their leisure. If they're losing, they'll probably retreat through the portal. If they're being particularly clueless (it happens to every table once in a while), you can have a shadowy figure on the other side of the portal beckon toward them. If things go off the rails and the PCs get wiped out by Kas, they deserve what they get ... which is a new unlife as Kas's vampires. But even then, the adventure path isn't over. Kas isn't part of the Bahamut/Tiamat struggle, but he becomes intensely curious about it and sends vampire versions of the PCs to Vaerothim to find out what's going on. The game is still afoot, but the PCs have a new wrinkle in that they need a cure for vampirism and a way to break free of Kas in addition to everything else on their plates.

The PCs Give Kas the Sword: It's possible that particularly hidebound PCs will honor a bargain with a guy whose sobriquet is "the betrayer." Right before they do so, have Kas lay it on thick: *"Ah, think of the wondrous terrors my sword and I will bring into being!"* If they really, truly give Kas the sword, then he either fights the PCs (if you think the PCs have any fight left in them) or insults them as he heads through the portal.

Now Monadhan essentially resets itself. The PCs see faint stirrings near Arantor's corpse. He returns to unlife in 24 hours. And there's a new object of great betrayal somewhere in Monadhan. The PCs can visit the seer (if alive) or use ritual means to discover what it is. Then they must attain it (probably after a short adventure you create) and then face Arantor once more.

S1: On the Side of the Angels

Encounter Level 21 (16,000 XP)

Setup

Angel of secrets (A)

This is a negotiation, pure and simple. The PCs will strike a deal with Rachaela and learn more about what to expect in Monadhan.

When the PCs enter the chamber, read:

You enter the room to find an angel with a stern countenance floating at the far end of a long table. She wears a white tabard with a red gauntlet design along the edge. The angel bows and motions for you to sit. Wine goblets appear out of nowhere at each seat.

"I am Rachaela, and I bear news of your wider efforts," she says. "Despite your recent successes and the Coalition's victories, Tiamat's plotting continues unabated. Even as we speak, one of her exarchs is guarding a ritualist of unparalleled potency. We do not know exactly what ritual they are working on, but if Tiamat is placing such importance on the ritual, we cannot afford to let it come to fruition. We want you to stop the exarch, Mornujhar, and capture or kill the ritualist.

"But it won't be easy. You'll need to pass through part of the Shadowfell known as Monadhan, the Domain of Betrayal, just to reach a portal that connects to Mornujhar's fortress. Will you aid us one more time?"

On the Side of Angels **Level 21**
Skill Challenge XP 3,200

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).
Primary Skills: Diplomacy, Insight, Religion.

Diplomacy (DC 22, standard action)
The character impresses Rachaela with his forthright demeanor and ability. This earns the heroes one success. It's also a chance for Rachaela to provide additional detail in her reply.
"Once you get to Monadhan, you won't be able to simply use a teleportation ritual to get back here. You must find a portal—probably guarded by Arantor, the dark lord of the domain—and use it to move onward toward the black exarch."

Insight (DC 27, standard action)
A successful Insight check not only earns the characters a success, but it suggests that Rachaela is holding something back. If pressed, she'll say she's hiding who her superiors are.
"There is some risk you'll be captured, and I am sending you to the Domain of Betrayal, after all. I trust you, but I worry about the supernatural power of betrayal in such a place. Best to be circumspect."

Religion (DC 14, standard action)
You can garner only one success with this skill. In addition to earning a success, the PC learns that the red gauntlet motif on Rachaela's tabard resembles iconography used by priests of Kord several centuries ago. If asked about Kord directly, Rachaela smiles and says, *"Suffice it to say that I admire Kord's strength."*

Secondary Skills: Intimidate, Religion.

Intimidate (DC 27, standard action)
Having a tough demeanor, if skillfully done, can impress Rachaela. This doesn't earn any successes directly but provides a +2 bonus on the next check made by a primary skill.

Religion (DC 25/30/25, standard action)
A PC can make a monster knowledge check during the skill challenge. This doesn't earn any successes, but it does give the PCs some idea of what they're dealing with. A 25 or higher on the Religion check reveals that Rachaela is an angel of secrets, an immortal humanoid with the angel subtype (obviously). A 30 or higher also reveals the basics of its *memory blade*, *mind lash*, *roaring revelation*, and *foresight* powers. A 35 or higher reveals it has resist 10 radiant and is immune to disease and fear.

Success: Rachaela agrees to give the PCs treasure parcels A, B, and C before they leave for Monadhan, and the extra rewards mentioned in "Grasp of the Mantled Citadel" when they return victorious. She will perform the Planar Portal ritual to send the PCs to Monadhan or provide the sigil sequence so the PCs can do so themselves.

Failure: Rachaela gives the PCs their choice of treasure parcels A, B, or C (but not all three) and just the normal award at the end of the next adventure. She'll perform the Planar Portal ritual for the PCs.

This angel has a genuine mission for the PCs, and she truly wants them to succeed. But she also has a few secrets of her own: her real name is Niuria, and she serves Vecna. She won't reveal this under any circumstances and carefully chose her clothing to suggest that she serves Kord.

Begin the skill challenge once Rachaela has laid out the mission in broad terms—something along the lines of the readaloud text above.

This is more than an ordinary skill challenge, because the negotiations with Rachaela serve two purposes. First, they are indeed a challenge for the PCs. Second, it's a chance for you to provide key exposition that sets up the rest of the adventure, whether or not the characters overcome this challenge.

Angel of Secrets (A) **Level 22 Elite Controller**
Large immortal humanoid (angel) XP 8,300

Initiative +20 **Senses** Perception +23; darkvision
Angelic Presence Attacks against the angel of secrets take a -2 penalty until the angel is bloodied; once bloodied, the penalty increases to -4.
HP 408; **Bloodied** 204
AC 36; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 36
Immune disease, fear; **Resist** 10 radiant
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6, fly 8 (hover)
Action Points 1

⓵ **Memory Blade** (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Reach 2; +27 vs. AC; 3d6 + 8 psychic damage, and the target can't use encounter powers or daily powers until the end of the angel's next turn.

Mind Lash (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 10; +25 vs. Will; 2d10 + 8 psychic damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the angel's next turn.

Roaring Revelation (Standard, encounter and when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Psychic, Thunder**
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +23 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 8 psychic and thunder damage, and the target is stunned until the end of the angel's next turn.

Foresight (Immediate Interrupt, when attacked, recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Teleportation**
The angel of secrets teleports 4 squares and makes a *memory blade* attack.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** All
Skills Arcana +22, History +22, Stealth +20

Str 22 (+17)	**Dex** 18 (+15)	**Wis** 23 (+17)
Con 20 (+16)	**Int** 23 (+17)	**Cha** 27 (+19)

Equipment memory sword, cloak of angels, chainmail.

W1: The Eight of Us Say Welcome

Encounter Level 20 (14,000 XP)

Setup

1 heroslayer hydra (H)

The PCs' first task is to get to the Shantytown, Monadhan's sole settlement. To do so, they have a lot of jungle to cross, and along the way, they'll encounter a hydra.

When the adventurers get within about 10 squares of the pool, read:

You've been working your way away from the mists and into the forest, and now you've reached a clearing with a pool of murky water in the center of it. Before you even have a chance to approach, a five-headed reptile erupts from underwater. It bellows as, one by one, each head turns to regard you.

Then it lurches forward, five jaws opening wide.

Tactics

This is a straightforward battle, a sort of "shakedown cruise" for players still getting used to their epic-level abilities. The hydra doesn't have any connection to the ongoing plot; sometimes a monster is just a monster. Your goal in this battle isn't to play the monster optimally. You'll have plenty of time for that later. Instead, try to give the players a warm-up fight that lets them flex their epic muscles before the more difficult encounters ahead.

From the players' perspective, the hydra is a very well-behaved beast. Because it wants to take advantage of its *heroslayer* bonus, it almost always accedes to the marked condition and attacks the party defender. Watch for critical hits from the PCs—they recharge the rampage attack. When not rampaging, have the hydra concentrate its attacks on the defender, because doing so gets you a certain +2 attack and +5 damage, plus the possibility of another 10 damage if you hit with two bite attacks.

Don't be shy about moving, even if it provokes opportunity attacks. The hydra has almost 800 hit points, after all, and damage just makes it grow more heads. You want as many PCs as possible nearby, both for the *rampage* and more importantly for *threatening reach*. Because the hydra is huge, it can move through PC squares as long as it doesn't end its turn on top of a PC. (PCs can also move through the hydra's squares, provoking opportunity attacks as usual.)

Features of the Area:

Illumination: Monadhan never gets brighter than an overcast day, but its skies never go completely dark, either.

Water: Near the center of the encounter area, mark a 4 x 4 square as deep water, then surround that with roughly three squares of shallow water, making an asymmetrical pond. The hydra starts submerged in the deep water.

The squares marked as shallow water are difficult terrain. The deep water is about 10 feet deep. That's difficult terrain for the hydra, and large or smaller creatures trying to fight in deep water suffer the penalties and restrictions of aquatic combat (described on page 45 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Vegetation: The exact location of bushes and trees doesn't matter. Just scatter contiguous squares of vegetation as you see fit. The vegetation is obscuring terrain that provides concealment and is difficult terrain.

Tree Trunks: In the middle of some vegetation squares, leave a square (or even a 2 x 2 space) as blocking terrain—the trunk of the banyanlike trees that make up much of Monadhan's jungle. Climbing a tree requires a DC 15 Athletics check. Ascending 20 feet grants concealment from obscuring leaves. The top of the jungle canopy is 50 feet above ground.

Heroslayer Hydra (H)	**Level 20 Solo Brute**
Huge natural beast (reptile)	XP 14,000
Initiative +14	**Senses** Perception +19; all-around vision
HP 776; **Bloodied** 388	
AC 32; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 30	
Saving Throws +5	
Speed 6	
Action Points 2	
⊕ **Bite** (Standard, at-will)	
Reach 3; +23 vs. AC; 1d10 + 8 damage.	
↓ **Hydra Fury** (Standard, at-will)	
The heroslayer hydra makes five bite attacks, plus an additional attack for each head it has grown (see *regenerating heads*). A target hit by more than one bite attack in a round takes 10 extra damage.	
↓ **Rampage** (Standard, recharges when a critical hit is scored against the heroslayer hydra)	
The hydra makes one bite attack against each enemy within reach. On a hit, the target takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends).	
Heroslayer	
While a heroslayer hydra is marked, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +5 bonus to damage rolls against the creature that marked it.	
Many-Headed	
Each time a heroslayer hydra would become dazed or stunned, it instead loses one attack while using *hydra fury* during its next turn. The hydra can be dazed or stunned multiple times.	
Regenerating Heads	
When a heroslayer hydra first reaches 582, 388, and 194 hit points, a head is destroyed. At the start of the hydra's next turn after a head is destroyed, two heads grow in the lost head's place, and the hydra gains an additional bite attack with *hydra fury*.	
Threatening Reach	
A heroslayer hydra can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (3 squares).	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** –
Str 23 (+16)	**Dex** 19 (+14) **Wis** 18 (+14)
Con 26 (+18)	**Int** 2 (+6) **Cha** 9 (+9)

W2: The Death Giant's Pet

Encounter Level 21 (14,350 XP)

Setup

1 chuul juggernaut (C)
1 death giant soulcatcher (D)

Most of the death giants in Arantor's employ use steel predators as guardians and pets. This giant is experimenting with an alternative. After much trial and error, he's trained one of the chuuls that inhabit Monadhan's jungles. The chuul fears the caves, however, so the death giant is stuck patrolling far from base with its pet.

As the characters work their way through the jungle, read:

You're making faster progress now, because you've found a relatively straight path through the jungle. It looks as if someone—or someones, more likely—cut their way through the vegetation with a machete.

Perception Check

DC 10: *Whatever made this path was dragging something massive—maybe its own tail.*

DC 20: *A large creature wearing boots accompanied the dragging creature.*

Nature Check

DC 30: *The cut-back vegetation bears the mark of something with pincers or mandibles—perhaps a chuul or umber hulk.*

Chuul Juggernaut (C) **Level 23 Elite Soldier**
Huge aberrant magical beast (aquatic) XP 10,200

Initiative +17 **Senses** Perception +17; darkvision
Psychic Moan (Psychic) aura 1; a chuul juggernaut exudes a constant hum of psychic energy. Enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to Will defense and gain vulnerable 5 psychic.
HP 434; **Bloodied** 217
AC 39; **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 33
Saving Throws +2
Speed 7, swim 7
Action Points 1

⊕ **Claw** (Standard, at-will)
Reach 3; +30 vs. AC; 2d8 + 8 damage, or 5d8 + 8 damage against an immobilized creature.

⊕ **Double Attack** (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Poison**
The chuul juggernaut makes two claw attacks. If both claw attacks hit a single target, the chuul juggernaut makes a secondary attack against the same target with its tentacles.
Secondary Attack
+28 vs. Fortitude; the target is immobilized (save ends).

Psychic Lure (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 10; +29 vs. Will; 2d10 + 3 psychic damage, and the target is pulled 5 squares.

Tentacle Net ✦ **Poison**
A creature hit by a chuul juggernaut's opportunity attack is immobilized until the end of the juggernaut's next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Deep Speech
Str 27 (+19) **Dex** 19 (+15) **Wis** 22 (+17)
Con 25 (+18) **Int** 4 (+8) **Cha** 16 (+14)

The encounter is a meeting engagement; the death giant and chuul are using their trail from yesterday's patrol to start today's patrol, so they're heading away from the shantytown just as the PCs are heading toward it.

Death Giant Soulcatcher (D) **Level 22 Controller**
Large shadow humanoid (giant) XP 4,150

Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +19; darkvision
Soulsnatcher aura 10; a creature that dies within the aura bestows one soul shard to the soulcatcher (see *soul shroud*).
HP 209; **Bloodied** 104
AC 36; **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 35
Resist 15 necrotic
Speed 8

⊕ **Soul Dagger** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; + 27 vs. AC; 2d6 + 8 damage and the target is immobilized until the end of the soulcatcher's next turn.

Soul Shrive (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Ranged 10; + 26 vs. Fortitude; the target is stunned and loses 1 healing surge at the start of its turn (save ends both). A target without healing surges takes damage equal to one quarter its total hit points. Each time the target loses a healing surge or takes damage from *soul shrive*, the soulcatcher gains a soul shard.

Soulfury Detonation (standard; must expend 3 soul shards; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Burst 2 within 10; +26 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 6 necrotic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Consume Soul Shard (minor; at-will) ✦ **Healing**
The soulcatcher expends one soul shard and regains 20 hit points.

Soul Shroud
The soul shroud contains soul shards that swirl around the soulcatcher to protect and empower it. At the beginning of an encounter, the soul shroud contains four soul shards. While the soul shroud is depleted of soul shards, the soulcatcher takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Giant
Skills Intimidate + 18
Str 28 (+20) **Dex** 20 (+16) **Wis** 22 (+17)
Con 25 (+18) **Int** 12 (+12) **Cha** 15 (+13)
Equipment leather armor, dagger

Tactics

This is the first contact the PCs have with someone actually loyal to Arantor; a lone death giant scout that patrols the jungle.

Chuul: The chuul juggernaut makes a double attack whenever it can, hoping to also make the immobilizing secondary attack. If it can't reach the PCs with a single move, it uses *psychic lure* to bring a PC closer.

Remember that because the chuul is huge, it can move through PCs' squares as long as it doesn't end its movement there (and the PCs can do likewise).

Death Giant Soulcatcher: The soulcatcher stays a square or two behind the chuul and uses *soul shrive* until it's built up four soul shards: enough for a *soul-fury detonation* with a soul shard left over to avoid the –2 attack penalty. Remind players hit by *soul shrive* that they've lost their healing surges only temporarily. They'll get the healing surges back when they make the saving throw.

The chuul juggernaut fights until slain, but the death giant will try to flee if reduced below 30 hit points. Such a retreat is unlikely to be successful if the PCs are still in fighting trim.

Features of the Area:

Illumination: Monadhan never gets brighter than an overcast day, but its skies never go completely dark, either.

Vegetation: The exact location of the bushes and trees doesn't matter. Just scatter contiguous squares of vegetation as you see fit. The vegetation is obscuring terrain that provides concealment and is difficult terrain.

Tree Trunks: In the middle of some vegetation squares, leave a square (or even a 2 x 2 space) as blocking terrain—the trunk of the banyanlike trees that make up much of Monadhan's jungle. Climbing a tree requires a DC 15 Athletics check. Ascending 20 feet grants concealment from obscuring leaves. The top of the jungle canopy is 50 feet above ground.

T1: Seer's Hut

Encounter Level 22 (17,900 XP)

Setup

1 cambion soulthief (S)
1 callophage vampire (C)
3 disfigured vampires (N)

The PCs' investigation leads them to Monadhan's seer, but she's not alone. Kas's agents try to capture or kill the PCs before they can learn more about the nature of the domain they're in.

When the PCs reach a suitably dramatic point in their discussion with the Seer of Monadhan, read:

A woman in tattered robes calls out from the street, "Sarissa! Oh, seer! I trust I'm not interrupting anything. Ah, I see you have guests. . . ."

Perception Check
DC 25: *The woman on the street is standing at the edge of a puddle in the road, but you don't see her reflection in the puddle.*

The "woman" is a callophage vampire created by a ritual known to her master, Kas the Betrayer. Kas is in Monadhan seeking his sword, so he's told his agents here to be on the lookout for powerful visitors. When strangers come to Monadhan, Kas's agents are under orders to kill or capture them. As long as at least one newcomer survives, Kas figures he can learn what he needs to know through interrogation. If all the newcomers happen to die, there's always the Speak with Dead ritual.

Tactics

Kas's crew is out to kill the PCs, but they're also trying to learn why the PCs have come to the Shantytown in the first place. During the battle, they'll converse with the PCs and try to get information from them. They aren't interested in negotiation or parley, however; they'll fight fiercely throughout any conversation.

Cambion Soulthief: The soulthief is circling overhead invisibly at the start of the fight but lands with a move action during its first turn and makes a longsword attack or a double lunge, dealing the extra damage from combat advantage. It tries to shift away and use *soul grasp* in the following round. Ideally, it makes a *soul grasp* attack, then turns invisible and teleports with *soul fuel* (if the *soul grasp* hits) or flies to a spot with cover or concealment (if the *soul grasp* misses).

Disfigured Vampire: The disfigured vampires come out of the shanties at the start of their turn and engage the nearest PCs in melee. They're straightforward combatants, resorting to *blood drain* only if they need hit points and are flanking a PC or are within range of a PC in the callophage's clutches. Don't forget to use their gaze attacks twice: when bloodied and when they die.

Callophage Vampire: The callophage vampire wades into the middle of the PCs immediately, trying to hit as many as possible with its *alluring visage*. Then it claws a PC, following with a *disfiguring bite*. Once the callophage has disfigured an enemy, it makes a *stolen beauty* attack against a character who's trying to stay out of the fray, such as a wizard or other ranged controller.

The soulthiefs and disfigured vampires fight until slain, but if the callophage vampire is below 50 hit points and it looks as if the monsters are losing, she'll polymorph into mist form and flee into the heart of the Monadhan shantytown. Whether the PCs give chase right away or after a short rest, they are led into encounter T2.

Sarissa: Sarissa is a noncombatant. She doesn't need to survive this encounter. One of Kas's crew can slay her with a single attack.

Cambion Soulthief (S)	**Level 22 Lurker**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)	XP 4,150
Initiative +22	**Senses** Perception +18; darkvision
HP 156; **Bloodied** 78	
AC 36; **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 30	
Resist 15 fire	
Speed 10, Fly 8 (clumsy)	
⊕ **Longsword** (standard, at-will) ✦ Weapon	
+27 vs. AC; 2d6 + 8 damage.	
⊗ **Soul Grasp** (standard; recharges when no enemy is affected by this power) ✦ **Necrotic**	
Ranged 10; +27 vs. Will; 1d10 + 8 necrotic damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage and is slowed (save ends both). *First Failed Save:* The target is immobilized instead of slowed (save ends). *Second Failed Save:* The target is stunned instead of immobilized (save ends).	
⊕ **Double Lunge** (standard; must be invisible; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
The cambion soulthief makes a *longsword* attack against two targets.	
Combat Advantage	
The cambion soulthief deals 1d6 extra damage on melee attacks against any target granting combat advantage to it.	
Invisibility (standard, at-will) ✦ **Illusion**	
The cambion soulthief becomes invisible until it attacks.	
Soul Fuel (minor; a creature must be immobilized or stunned by this soulthief's *soul grasp*; at-will)	
The cambion soulthief turns invisible until it attacks and teleports 10. The creature affected by soul grasp loses a healing surge and automatically saves against the effect of *soul grasp*.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Stealth +23	
Str 23 (+17)	**Dex** 25 (+18) **Wis** 14 (+13)
Con 18 (+15)	**Int** 13 (+12) **Cha** 17 (+14)
Equipment longsword, iron gauntlet	

Callophage Vampire (C) **Level 22 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 4,150

Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +19; darkvision
HP 203; **Bloodied** 101
Regeneration 10 (regeneration does not function while the callophage vampire is exposed to direct sunlight)
AC 36; **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 35
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 15 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant
Speed 6

Claw (Standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+28 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is grabbed.

Blood Drain (Standard; must have combat advantage; recharges when an adjacent creature becomes bloodied) ✦ **Healing**
+24 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 15 damage, and the target is weakened (save ends), and the callophage vampire regains 50 hit points.

Disfiguring Bite (Standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Targets a creature grabbed by the callophage vampire; +26 vs.Fortitude; 3d8 + 5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 psychic damage and is dazed (save ends both).

Stolen Beauty (Standard; cannot be used until a disfiguring bite hits; recharges after each successful *disfiguring bite*) ✦ **Charm, Psychic**
Ranged 10; +26 vs. Will; 3d10 + 3 psychic damage, and the target cannot use encounter attack powers, daily attack powers, or utility powers (save ends). *Aftereffect:* The target cannot willingly move closer to the callophage vampire (save ends).

Alluring Visage (standard; recharges when bloodied) ✦ **Charm**
Close burst 10; +26 vs.Will; the target is pulled 3 squares and immobilized (save ends). *Sustain Minor:* Each creature that has not yet saved against the effect is pulled 3 squares and immobilized (save ends).

Mist Form (standard; encounter) ✦ **Polymorph**
The callophage vampire becomes insubstantial and gains a fly speed of 12, but cannot make attacks. The callophage vampire can remain in mist form for up to 1 hour or end the effect as a minor action.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Diplomacy +21, Streetwise +21
Str 18 (+15) **Dex** 20 (+16) **Wis** 17 (+14)
Con 19 (+15) **Int** 20 (+16) **Cha** 21 (+16)

3 Disfigured Vampires (N) **Level 21 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 3,200

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +16; darkvision
HP 245; **Bloodied** 122
Regeneration 10 (regeneration does not function while the disfigured vampire is exposed to direct sunlight)
AC 33; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 31
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 15 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 15 radiant
Speed 6

Vampiric Claw (Standard, at-will) ✦ Necrotic
+24 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage, and 10 ongoing necrotic damage (save ends).

Gaze Upon My Hideous Ruin (immediate reaction, when first bloodied and again when reduced to 0 hit points; at-will) ✦ **Fear, Psychic**
Close burst 2; +22 vs. Will; 2d8 + 7 psychic damage, and the disfigured vampire pushes the target 5 squares.

Blood Drain (Standard; requires combat advantage; recharges when an adjacent creature becomes bloodied) ✦ **Healing**
+23 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 13 damage, and the target is weakened (save ends), and the disfigured vampire regains 61 hit points.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Str 23 (+16) **Dex** 15 (+12) **Wis** 13 (+11)
Con 25 (+17) **Int** 7 (+8) **Cha** 17 (+13)

Features of the Area:

Illumination: What passes for ambient light in Monadhan is the sources of light here. The vampires' regeneration functions normally.

Walls: The shanty walls provide cover, but they're flimsy. Any attack that hits a wall, even an unarmed attack from a weak PC, creates a hole roughly 1 foot in diameter. Once there's a hole, a creature can attack creatures on the other side of the wall and gain the benefit of superior cover (incoming attacks suffer a -5 penalty). A second hit in the same section of shanty wall makes the hole big enough to function as a doorway.

Wrecked Shanty: The debris from collapsed shanty walls is difficult terrain.

Vegetation: The thick bushes and vine-festooned trees offer concealment and are difficult terrain.

Fence: Jumping or vaulting across the fence at full speed requires a DC 20 Athletics or Acrobatics check. Those who fail the check get over the fence but end their movement in the square just beyond it. Creatures can also put holes in the fences the same as in the shanty walls.

Sarissa's Hut: Among Sarissa's scant personal effects is treasure parcel D. If she survives the battle, she gives the treasure to the PCs in gratitude (but she keeps the gold they paid her). If Sarissa dies, the PCs find the treasure parcel near her corpse.

T2: Shantytown

Encounter Level 22 (17,550 XP)

Setup

Gwenth (G)
1 callophage vampire (C)
1 disfigured vampire (N)

The PCs chase the mysterious figure fleeing from the battle at the seer's hut only to find more of Kas's agents ready to ambush them.

When the characters approach the pool in the middle of the map, read:

You see a pale woman in leather armor glide gracefully over the footbridge, drawing two short swords as she does so. Another vampire in tattered robes stands atop the wreckage of a shanty to the east.

Perception Check
DC 22: *Something big is rustling on the other side of the porous shanty walls to the west.*

Another disfigured vampire is hiding in the shanty just west of the PCs, plus the callophage to the east and Gwenth coming from the north.

Tactics

Kas's crew makes its first serious effort to kill or capture the PCs at this point. The vampire Gwenth is one of Kas's most trusted lieutenants, and she's eager to curry favor with Kas (and make Rolain look less effective by comparison).

Gwenth, Vampire (G) **Level 23 Elite Skirmisher**
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 10,200
Initiative + 21 **Senses** Perception +20; darkvision
HP 434; **Bloodied** 217
Regeneration 15 (regeneration does not function while Gwenth is exposed to direct sunlight)
AC 37; **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 34
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 15 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant (if Gwenth is exposed to direct sunlight, her regeneration does not function on her next turn)
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8, climb 4 (spider climb)
Action Points 1

⊕ **Bloodletter** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+28 vs. AC; 2d6 + 3 damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

Slashing Roll (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Gwenth shifts 4 squares and makes two *bloodletter* attacks at any point in the movement.

Blood Drain (standard; must have combat advantage; recharge when an adjacent creature becomes bloodied) ✦ **Healing**
+26 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 6 damage, and the target is weakened (save ends), and Gwenth heals 108 hit points.

Eviscerate (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
+28 vs. AC; one or two targets; 5d6 + 8 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Betraying Gaze (standard; encounter) ✦ **Charm, Gaze**
Area burst 3 within 10; +26 vs. Will; the target makes an at-will attack against a target of Gwenth's choice and is immobilized (save ends).

Combat Advantage
Gwenth deals an extra 4d6 damage with her attacks against any target she has combat advantage against.

Mist Step (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleport**
Gwenth teleports up to 6 squares and becomes insubstantial until the end of her next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Bluff +22, Insight +20, Stealth +24
Str 24 (+18) **Dex** 27 (+19) **Wis** 18 (+15)
Con 25 (+18) **Int** 16 (+14) **Cha** 22 (+17)
Equipment leather armor, 2 short swords

Callophage Vampire (C) **Level 22 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 4,150
Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +19; darkvision
HP 203; **Bloodied** 101
Regeneration 10 (regeneration does not function while the callophage vampire is exposed to direct sunlight)
AC 36; **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 35
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 15 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant
Speed 6

⊕ **Claw** (Standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+28 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is grabbed.

Blood Drain (Standard; must have combat advantage; recharges when an adjacent creature becomes bloodied) ✦ **Healing**
+24 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 15 damage, and the target is weakened (save ends), and the callophage vampire regains 50 hit points.

Disfiguring Bite (Standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Targets a creature grabbed by the callophage vampire; +26 vs.Fortitude; 3d8 + 5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 psychic damage and is dazed (save ends both).

Stolen Beauty (Standard; cannot be used until a disfiguring bite hits; recharges after each successful *disfiguring bite*) ✦ **Charm, Psychic**
Ranged 10; +26 vs. Will; 3d10 + 3 psychic damage, and the target cannot use encounter attack powers, daily attack powers, or utility powers (save ends). *Aftereffect:* The target cannot willingly move closer to the callophage vampire (save ends).

Alluring Visage (standard; recharges when bloodied) ✦ **Charm**
Close burst 10; +26 vs.Will; the target is pulled 3 squares and immobilized (save ends). *Sustain Minor:* Each creature that has not yet saved against the effect is pulled 3 squares and immobilized (save ends).

Mist Form (standard; encounter) ✦ **Polymorph**
The callophage vampire becomes insubstantial and gains a fly speed of 12, but cannot make attacks. The callophage vampire can remain in mist form for up to 1 hour or end the effect as a minor action.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Diplomacy +21, Streetwise +21
Str 18 (+15) **Dex** 20 (+16) **Wis** 17 (+14)
Con 19 (+15) **Int** 20 (+16) **Cha** 21 (+16)

Disfigured Vampire (N)	Level 21 Brute
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 3,200
Initiative +12	**Senses** Perception +16; darkvision
HP 245; **Bloodied** 122	
Regeneration 10 (regeneration does not function while the disfigured vampire is exposed to direct sunlight)	
AC 33; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 31	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 15 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 15 radiant	
Speed 6	
(+) **Vampiric Claw** (Standard, at-will) ✦ Necrotic	
+24 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage, and 10 ongoing necrotic damage (save ends).	
✧ **Gaze Upon My Hideous Ruin** (immediate reaction, when first bloodied and again when reduced to 0 hit points; at-will) ✦ **Fear, Psychic**	
Close burst 2; +22 vs. Will; 2d8 + 7 psychic damage, and the disfigured vampire pushes the target 5 squares.	
ǂ **Blood Drain** (Standard; requires combat advantage; recharges when an adjacent creature becomes bloodied) ✦ **Healing**	
+23 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 13 damage, and the target is weakened (save ends), and the disfigured vampire regains 61 hit points.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common
Str 23 (+16)	**Dex** 15 (+12) **Wis** 13 (+11)
Con 25 (+17)	**Int** 7 (+8) **Cha** 17 (+13)

Disfigured Vampire: The disfigured bursts through the shanty wall and attacks whichever PC is standing nearest to it at the time. It uses *blood drain* only when Gwenth or the callophage vampire daze a PC (and thus grant it combat advantage).

Callophage Vampire: The callophage crosses the water at the southern footbridge, then uses the same tactics as the callophage in encounter T1: *alluring visage*, then a claw attack to set up *disfiguring bite*, then *stolen beauty* used against a PC who could be badly hampered if limited to at-will powers.

Gwenth: Gwenth uses *betraying gaze* in the first round if possible. Note that this is likely to result in a friendly fire incident. Then she uses *slashing roll* to lure the PCs into the maze of shanties in the western part of the map. With elite hit points, regeneration, and an attack that deals ongoing damage, she can afford to be patient. As soon as she's down 100 hit points, she'll use *eviscerate*, then *blood drain* to heal herself and weaken a PC. Thereafter, she'll use *eviscerate* whenever it's recharged, because she deals more damage when attacking a dazed enemy.

The disfigured and callophage fight until slain, but Gwenth will flee (probably via *mist step*) if reduced below 50 hit points. If she escapes, she returns to Kas's cave, where she remains until the end of the adventure(unless returning her to the fray at some point would be suitably dramatic).

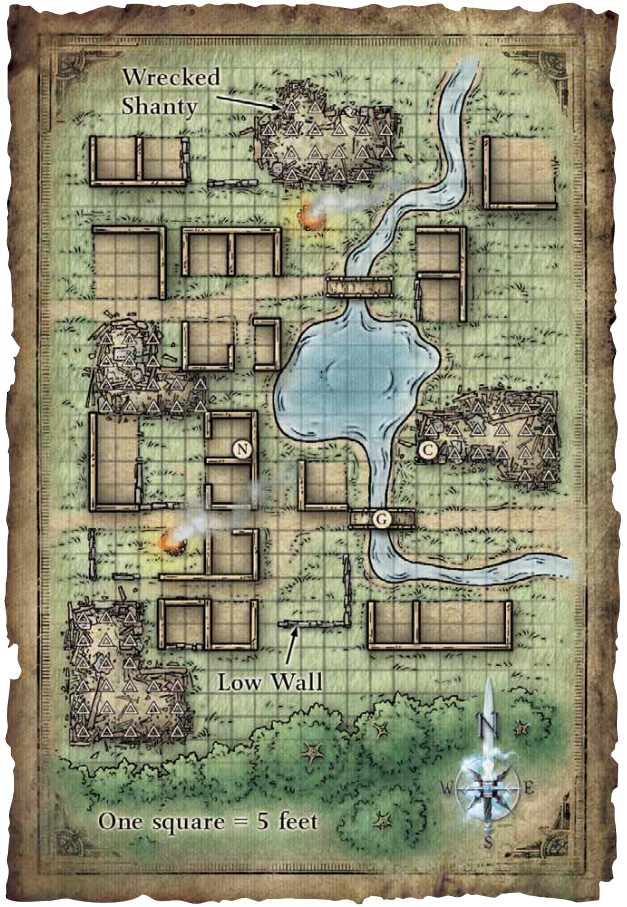
Features of the Area

Illumination: The bonfires marked on the map, plus Monadhan's ambient light, are the sources of light here. Even in the middle of the day, it's not considered direct sunlight that would suppress the vampires' regeneration.

Walls: The shanty walls provide cover, but they're flimsy. Any attack that hits a wall, even an unarmed attack from a weak PC, creates a hole roughly 1 foot in diameter. Once there's a hole, a creature can attack creatures on the other side of the wall and gain the benefit of superior cover (incoming attacks suffer a -5 penalty). A second hit in the same section of shanty wall makes the hole big enough to function as a doorway.

Wrecked Shanty: The debris from collapsed shanty walls is difficult terrain.

Low Wall: The low wall provides cover. A DC 20 Athletics or Acrobatics check is needed to jump or vault it at full speed. Those who fail the check get over the wall but end their movement in the square just beyond it. Creatures can also put holes in the low walls as if they were shanty walls.



Shallow Water: The squares marked as shallow water are difficult terrain.

Bonfire: The bonfires, which are used by the shantytown denizens to stave off a little of the domain's pervasive gloom, deal 10 fire damage and 5 ongoing fire damage (save ends) to any creature that starts its turn in the same square as the bonfire.

T3: Graveyard

Encounter Level 22 (17,550 XP)

Setup

Rolain (R)
1 callophage vampire (C)
1 disfigured vampire (N)

The PCs meet the mysterious "Rolain" they've heard about and learn that Rolain is in league with Kas.

When the PCs follow their quarry into the graveyard, read:

You've been walking along a path that winds through the graveyard, seeing stone mausoleums interspersed among headstones and graveyard statuary. A cloaked figure wearing a longsword and shield steps from behind one of the tombs ahead of you, arms folded across his chest. "I am Rolain," he says.

Perception Check

DC 22: *Besides Rolain, you glimpse a bulky outline on the far side of the mausoleum to the east.*

DC 26: *A third, slim figure hides behind a statue in the second row of graves to the west.*

Rolain is under orders to learn all he can about the PCs, so he'll talk to them and say nearly anything as long as he can keep them talking. When the characters stop sharing anything useful or the conversation turns into nothing but threats, Rolain's sword comes out. Once Rolain decides that the time for talking has passed, the PCs cannot convince him otherwise. He figures he'll get the rest of the story from a captured PC or a ritually compelled corpse.

Tactics

Rolain and the other vampires fight until the PCs or the vampires are dead.

Rolain: Rolain is a tough nut to crack, with elite soldier defenses, more than 400 hit points, and regeneration. He can afford to be patient. He uses his mark chiefly to inconvenience enemies (with the attack penalty that accompanies the condition) rather than to trigger *lethal guard*; he doesn't mind moving the mark from character to character. He uses *dominating gaze* and *irrefutable challenge* every chance he gets. *Dominating gaze* sets up the possibility of a friendly fire incident, and even after the dominated PC saves, it sets up Rolain's *blood drain* because the aftereffect is dazed. *Irrefutable challenge* keeps plenty of PCs within stabbing range

Disfigured Vampire: The disfigured fights like the disfigureds in encounters T1 and T2, except that it will do everything it can to push one or more enemies into a pit with its gaze attack. Because this maneuver is a triggered immediate action, some anticipation and planning on your part are needed to pull it off. The payoff, both in drama and tactical effectiveness, makes the effort worthwhile.

Callophage Vampire: The callophage's *alluring visage* is another good way to pull the PCs into a pit. Because it's sustained, the callophage can continue to tug at a PC who made the saving throw for hindering terrain (and thus may be prone at the pit's edge). This callophage is more cautious than her previous counterparts. Once she's charged up her *stolen beauty* attack, she'll retreat a bit and take cover behind a headstone before unleashing it.

Rolain, Vampire (R)	**Level 23 Elite Soldier**
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	XP 10,200
Initiative + 20	**Senses** Perception +20; darkvision
HP 434; **Bloodied** 217	
Regeneration 15 (regeneration does not function while Rolain is exposed to direct sunlight)	
AC 41; **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 36	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 15 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant (if Rolain is exposed to direct sunlight, his regeneration does not function on his next turn)	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 7, climb 3 (spider climb)	
Action Points 1	
Longsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon** + 30 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target is marked until the end of Rolain's next turn.	
Lethal Guard (opportunity, when an adjacent creature marked by Rolain makes an attack that does not include him or shifts; at-will) Rolain makes a *longsword* attack against the triggering creature.	
Blood Drain (standard, encounter; recharges when an adjacent creature becomes bloodied) ✦ **Healing** Requires combat advantage. +28 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 6 damage, and the target is weakened (save ends), and Rolain heals 108 hit points.	
Shield Slam (minor; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Weapon** +28 vs. Fortitude; the target is stunned until the end of Rolain's next turn.	
Dominating Gaze (minor; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Charm, Gaze** Ranged 5; + 27 vs. Will; the target is dominated (save ends, with a -2 penalty on the saving throw). *Aftereffect:* The target is dazed (save ends). Rolain can dominate only one creature at a time.	
Irrefutable Challenge (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon** Close burst 4; targets enemies; no attack roll; pull the target within the burst 3 squares to a square adjacent to Rolain. A target that cannot end adjacent does not move. Then Rolain makes a *longsword* attack against each adjacent enemy.	
Mist Step (move; encounter) ✦ **Teleport** Rolain teleports up to 6 squares and becomes insubstantial until the end of his next turn.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common
Skills Insight +20, Intimidate +19	
Str 27 (+19)	**Dex** 24 (+18) **Wis** 18 (+15)
Con 25 (+18)	**Int** 16 (+14) **Cha** 22 (+17)
Equipment leather armor, longsword, heavy shield	

Callophage Vampire (C) **Level 22 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 4,150

Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +19; darkvision
HP 203; **Bloodied** 101
Regeneration 10 (regeneration does not function while the callophage vampire is exposed to direct sunlight)
AC 36; **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 35
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 15 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant
Speed 6

Claw (Standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+28 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is grabbed.

Blood Drain (Standard; must have combat advantage; recharges when an adjacent creature becomes bloodied) ✦ **Healing**
+24 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 15 damage, and the target is weakened (save ends), and the callophage vampire regains 50 hit points.

Disfiguring Bite (Standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Targets a creature grabbed by the callophage vampire; +26 vs.Fortitude; 3d8 + 5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 psychic damage and is dazed (save ends both).

Stolen Beauty (Standard; cannot be used until a disfiguring bite hits; recharges after each successful *disfiguring bite*) ✦ **Charm, Psychic**
Ranged 10; +26 vs. Will; 3d10 + 3 psychic damage, and the target cannot use encounter attack powers, daily attack powers, or utility powers (save ends). *Aftereffect:* The target cannot willingly move closer to the callophage vampire (save ends).

Alluring Visage (standard; recharges when bloodied) ✦ **Charm**
Close burst 10; +26 vs.Will; the target is pulled 3 squares and immobilized (save ends). *Sustain Minor:* Each creature that has not yet saved against the effect is pulled 3 squares and immobilized (save ends).

Mist Form (standard; encounter) ✦ **Polymorph**
The callophage vampire becomes insubstantial and gains a fly speed of 12, but cannot make attacks. The callophage vampire can remain in mist form for up to 1 hour or end the effect as a minor action.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Diplomacy +21, Streetwise +21
Str 18 (+15) **Dex** 20 (+16) **Wis** 17 (+14)
Con 19 (+15) **Int** 20 (+16) **Cha** 21 (+16)

Disfigured Vampire (N) **Level 21 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 3,200

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +16; darkvision
HP 245; **Bloodied** 122
Regeneration 10 (regeneration does not function while the disfigured vampire is exposed to direct sunlight)
AC 33; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 31
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 15 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 15 radiant
Speed 6

Vampiric Claw (Standard, at-will) ✦ Necrotic
+24 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage, and 10 ongoing necrotic damage (save ends).

Gaze Upon My Hideous Ruin (immediate reaction, when first bloodied and again when reduced to 0 hit points; at-will) ✦ **Fear, Psychic**
Close burst 2; +22 vs. Will; 2d8 + 7 psychic damage, and the disfigured vampire pushes the target 5 squares.

Blood Drain (Standard; requires combat advantage; recharges when an adjacent creature becomes bloodied) ✦ **Healing**
+23 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 13 damage, and the target is weakened (save ends), and the disfigured vampire regains 61 hit points.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Str 23 (+16) **Dex** 15 (+12) **Wis** 13 (+11)
Con 25 (+17) **Int** 7 (+8) **Cha** 17 (+13)

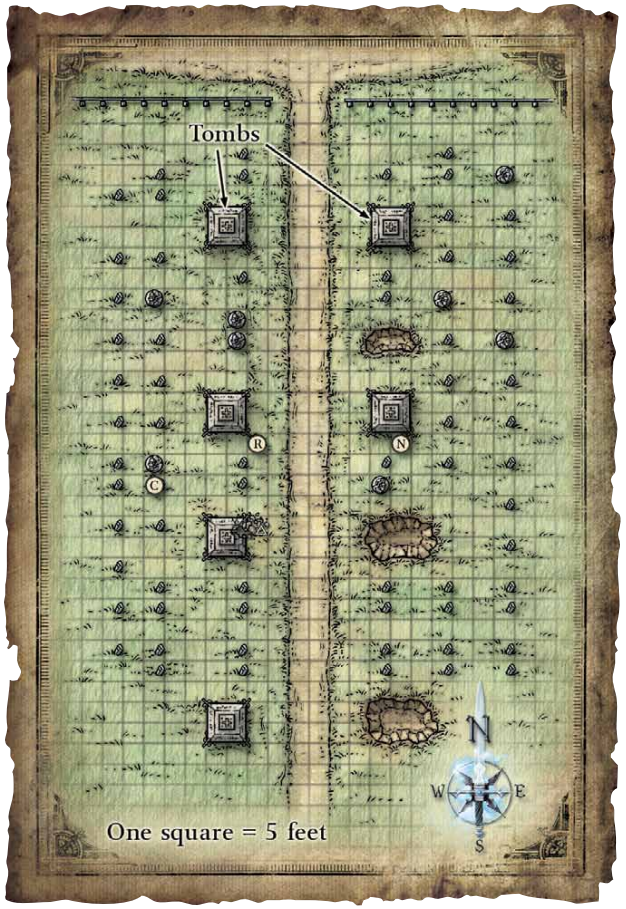
Features of the Area:

Illumination: The ambient light of Monadhan's sky provides somewhat gloomy illumination. The vampires regenerate normally.

Iron Fence: Unlike the fences in encounter T1, these wrought iron fences block movement but don't provide cover. A DC 10 Climb check is needed to scale the fence, which is 10 feet high.

Headstones: Creatures in the same square as a headstone gain cover.

Stone Tombs: These small mausoleums are blocking terrain. Most have been broken into and looted. Those few that remain undisturbed have been entirely sealed with mortar.



Statues: Most of these statues resemble elaborate versions of the headstones. They are difficult terrain and provide cover.

Pit: The pits are 15 feet deep, so falling into one presents little danger to any of the combatants. The walls, however, are mucky, slick, and unstable (DC 30 Athletics check to climb). They tend to collapse when a climber puts weight on a hand- or foothold, so that any failure on the Athletics check results in the climber sliding back to the bottom. The mud and debris at the bottom of each pit is difficult terrain.

T4: Desecrated Graveyard

Encounter Level 23 (25,500 XP)

Setup

1 desecration (D)

The battle with Rolain attracted the attention of a desecration—the animate force behind a graveyard full of traitors, turncoats, and other betrayers. It could not resist being drawn to the violence from the previous encounter.

When the PCs have had a short rest after encounter T3, read:

The ground starts to rumble. And in the gloom in front of you, the grave-earth and headstones start to take on an immense—and moving—shape.

Like the wilderness encounters, this encounter doesn't have much impact on the larger story. The desecration doesn't care about the PCs, Kas, Arantor, or the struggle between Tiamat and Bahamut. It was roused by violence and wants only to spread more of the same. This as an opportunity to demonstrate that not everything revolves around the campaign's central plot. Sometimes, bad things just happen.

Tactics

The desecration fights in straightforward fashion. It prefers to make *mouth of darkness* attacks, then move over a pit and drop the grabbed character into one. (Because the desecration is gargantuan, it treats the pits as difficult terrain.) If a PC is marking it, it will preferentially make *unholy smite* attacks if that PC isn't already taking ongoing necrotic damage. Remember that because it's gargantuan, the desecration can move through squares occupied by the characters and they can move through its squares, too.

The desecration fights until slain, but it won't leave the graveyard; if the adventurers choose to flee, it won't pursue them.

When the battle is over, Kas appears and tries to talk to the PCs (as described in the Shantytown section, page 13).

Features of the Area:

Illumination: The ambient light of Monadhan's sky provides somewhat gloomy illumination.

Iron Fence: Unlike the fences in encounter T1, these wrought iron fences block movement but don't provide cover. A DC 10 Climb check is needed to scale the fence, which is 10 feet high.

Headstones: Creatures in the same square as a headstone gain cover.

Stone Tombs: These small mausoleums are blocking terrain. Most have been broken into and looted. Those few that remain undisturbed have been entirely sealed with mortar.

Statues: Most of these statues resemble elaborate versions of the headstones. They are difficult terrain and provide cover.

Pit: The pits are 15 feet deep, so falling into one presents little danger to any of the combatants. The walls, however, are mucky, slick, and unstable (DC 30 Athletics check to climb). They tend to collapse when a climber puts weight on a hand- or foothold, so that any failure on the Athletics check results in the climber sliding back to the bottom. The mud and debris at the bottom of each pit is difficult terrain.

Newly Discovered Grave: If the heroes defeat the desecration, they notice that the turmoil churned a particularly old coffin to the surface. It's neither locked nor trapped. If the characters search it, they find a moldering skeleton and treasure parcels E, F, and G inside.

Desecration (D) **Level 23 Solo Controller**
Gargantuan natural animate (earth, undead) XP 25,500
Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +14; darkvision
Aura of Malevolence (Fear) aura 10; any enemy within the aura that attacks with a radiant power takes a -2 penalty to the attack roll.
HP 1,075; **Bloodied** 537
AC 39; **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 37
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant
Saving Throws +5
Speed 8
Action Points 2

⊕ **Unholy Smite** (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Reach 4; +28 vs. AC; 3d6 + 15 necrotic damage, and ongoing 15 necrotic damage (save ends).

Double Attack (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
The desecration makes two *unholy smite* attacks; +27 vs. AC; 3d6 + 8 damage.

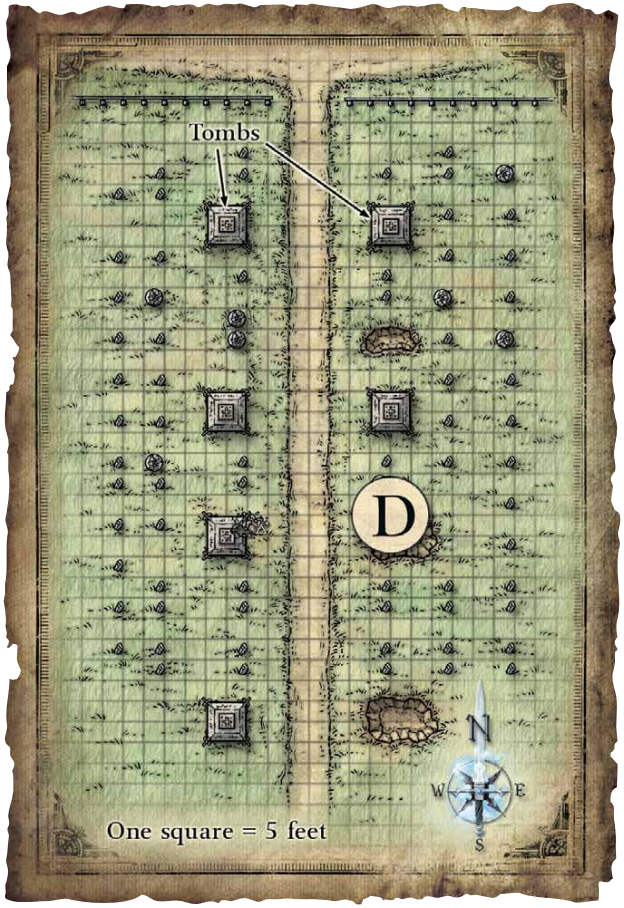
Mouth of Darkness (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Reach 4; +26 vs. Reflex; 2d12 + 15 necrotic damage, and the target is grabbed.

Dark Plague (when first bloodied and again when the desecration is reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Necrotic**
Close burst 20; targets enemies; +24 vs. Fortitude; the target is weakened (save ends). In addition, the target loses a healing surge. *Miss:* Half damage, and the target is weakened until the end of its next turn. The target does not lose a healing surge.

Rejuvenation
A desecration rises at full hit points one day after it has been destroyed. Only a quest destroys the creature completely, preventing it from using the *rejuvenation* power.

Second Wind (Standard, encounter) ✦ **Healing**
The desecration spends a healing surge and regains 269 hit points. The desecration gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of its next turn.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** –
Str 26 (+19) **Dex** 16 (+14) **Wis** 16 (+14)
Con 23 (+17) **Int** 10 (+11) **Cha** 24 (+18)



C1: Cavern of Rivers

Encounter Level 22 (16,800 XP)

Setup

1 fell troll (F)
1 dark naga (D)
2 cambion impalers (I)

No matter what the configuration of caverns (see the Shifting Caverns section), the Cavern of Rivers always lies closest to the surface and the keep. The cavern is home to a dark naga, some of Arantor's cambion guards, and a fell troll that the naga has trained.

When the PCs reach the northern entrance, read:

To your left, almost around a corner, is a waterfall cascading into a dark pool that runs through the center of the room. The foam from the waterfall is moving rapidly southward—there's a fast current running through the water. Smaller rivulets of water run down the sides of the cavern, splashing across the cavern floor to join the water in the center. Both the waterfall and the smaller streams of water pulse at irregular intervals; occasionally the roar of water falling on stone almost disappears for a second. Tiny droplets of water cover the smooth rock at your feet, making it quite slippery.

The water flows toward the southern wall, which is carved flat and covered with a black-on-white mosaic. Perhaps it's supposed to be veins or tree branches—many stones are missing, so it's hard to tell.

Some water flows into passages in the southeast and southwest corners of the room. The southwest corner has some exposed rock as far as you can see, but the southeast passage is covered in water. It could be only a foot of water, or it could be quite deep indeed. The water is so murky that it's impossible to judge depth by sight.

A massive snake with a human woman's head stirs from its coils on a rock outcropping to the southeast. Peering around a corner to the southwest is a humanoid head and an arm holding an iron spear.

Perception Check

DC 24: *The bubbles coming from the waterfall seem to be swerving around something in the middle of the water, just south of the waterfall. Either the water is shallower there, or there's some sort of mass just underwater.*

That "mass" under the water is the fell troll, which will emerge in the second or third round of the battle.

Dark Naga (D)	**Level 21 Elite Controller**
Large immortal magical beast (reptile)	XP 6,400
Initiative +14	**Senses** Perception +21; darkvision
HP 404; **Bloodied** 202	
AC 36; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 36	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 8	
Action Points 1	
⊕ **Tail Sting** (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Poison**	
Reach 2; +24 vs. AC; 2d6 + 8 poison damage (3d6 + 8 damage against a dazed target), and the target is slowed (save ends).	
⊹ **Lure** (Minor, at-will) ✦ **Charm**	
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +25 vs. Will; the target is pulled 1 square and dazed (save ends).	
⊹ **Psychic Miasma** (Standard, recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Psychic**	
Close burst 3; +26 vs. Will; 3d6 + 10 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). First Failed Save: The target is stunned (save ends).	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Draconic, Supernal
Skills History +22, Insight +21, Stealth +19	
Str 26 (+18)	**Dex** 18 (+14) **Wis** 22 (+16
Con 26 (+18)	**Int** 24 (+17) **Cha** 30 (+20)

2 Cambion Impalers (I) **Level 19 Skirmisher**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 2,400

Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +24; darkvision
HP 179; **Bloodied** 89
AC 33; **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 30
Resist 10 fire
Speed 6, fly 10 (clumsy)

Spear (Standard, at-will) ✦ Weapon
+24 vs. AC; 3d6+8 damage.

Swooping Charge (Standard, encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
The cambion impaler charges and makes the following attack in place of a melee basic attack: +25 vs. AC; 3d6 + 8 damage, and either slide the target 3 squares and immobilize the target until the end of the impaler's next turn or deal 10 ongoing damage. The impaler is not considered a clumsy flyer when making this attack.

Soulscorch (Standard, recharge ⚄) ✦ **Fire**
Area burst 1 within 10; +20 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 4 fire damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Athletics +20, Bluff +19, Diplomacy +19
Str 22 (+15) **Dex** 25 (+16) **Wis** 20 (+14
Con 19 (+13) **Int** 17 (+12) **Cha** 21 (+14)
Equipment robes, spear

Fell Troll (F) **Level 20 Elite Brute**
Huge natural humanoid XP 5,600

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +16
HP 360; **Bloodied** 180
Regeneration 15 (if the fell troll takes acid or fire damage, regeneration does not function until the end of its next turn)
AC 32; **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 31
Saving Throws +2
Speed 10
Action Points 1

Claw (Standard, at-will)
Reach 3; +23 vs. AC; 2d10 + 7 damage.

Backhand Slam (Standard, at-will)
Reach 3; +21 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 7 damage, and the target is pushed 4 squares and knocked prone.

Blood Frenzy
The fell troll gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied enemies.

Troll Healing ✦ Healing
If the fell troll is reduced to 0 hit points or fewer by an attack that does not deal acid or fire damage, it rises on its next turn (as a move action) with 20 hit points.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Skills Athletics +22, Endurance +23
Str 24 (+17) **Dex** 10 (+10) **Wis** 13 (+11
Con 27 (+18) **Int** 5 (+7) **Cha** 7 (+8)

Tactics

At first, this seems like a straightforward fight against some guards, but you're setting up the players for an "Aha!" moment when the fell troll rises out of the water. Let your own sense of timing and dramatic flair determine when the troll springs forth on your table. You also want the PCs to struggle a bit with the slippery floors and the water, so try to draw the PCs into the middle of the room, even if that means leaving a monster or two isolated and vulnerable.

Dark Naga: Maneuver the naga so it's at the heart of the battle and close to as many PCs as possible. It can slow, daze, and stun nearby PCs, and you want it to sow as much frustration as possible. If the PCs are slowed, dazed, and stunned in the current, so much the better. Don't be shy about moving the dark naga into the south-central part of the pool and daring the PCs to "come and get it." The dark naga can take some punishment and makes good bait.

Cambion Impalers: If the impalers can attack a PC right away by flying in for a melee attack, they will. If possible, save a *swooping charge* attack to give a three-square slide to a PC who is (wisely) refusing to get near the dark naga. If some or all of the PCs hang back and avoid melee completely, one or both of the impalers can counter with a *soulscorch* attack. The impalers will use *soulscorch* even if the fell troll is in the burst (which, if it hits, will knock out the troll's regeneration for a round and count as a "friendly fire" incident as described under The Sting of Betrayal on page 10.

The cambion impalers don't worry much about the difficult and challenging terrain, but they aren't completely immune to it because they're clumsy fliers – while airborne, they must move at least 2 squares per turn or crash (as described on p. 48 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Furthermore, they suffer a –4 penalty to attacks and damage while flying (except for their *swooping charge*), so they prefer to fly to an advantageous square and then land before attacking.

Fell Troll: The fell troll is a simple but effective monster. Don't forget to regenerate at the start of every turn unless it took fire or acid damage last turn. Use *backhand slam* if the attack will push the target close enough to the dark naga for its *psychic miasma* and *lure* attacks to work.

Features of the Area:

Illumination: This cavern has only the illumination the PCs bring with them.

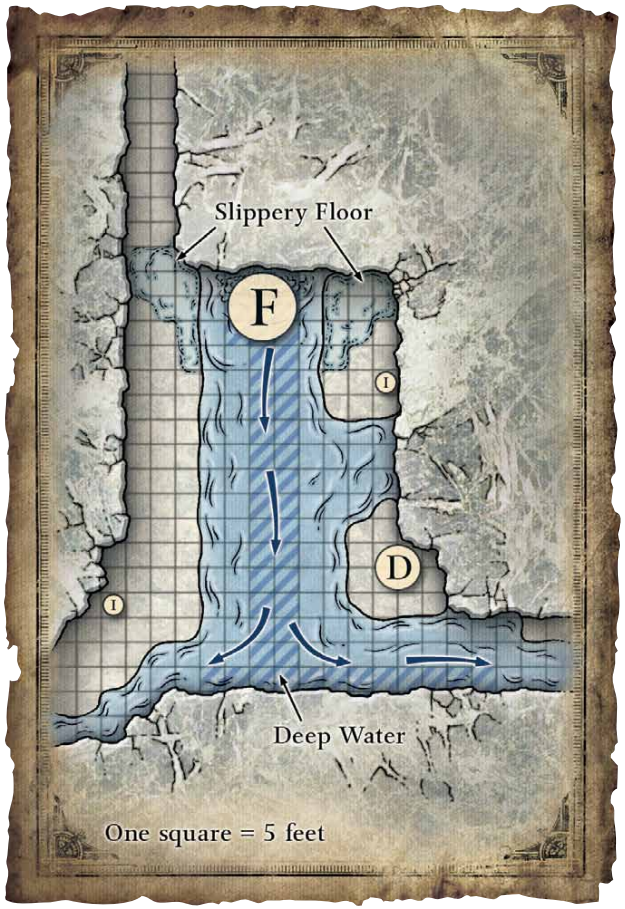
Ceiling: The ceiling of the cavern is 20 feet high.

Slippery Rock: The squares marked as slippery are challenging terrain, requiring a DC 14 Acrobatics check to negotiate. Characters who fail the Acrobatics check fall prone and end their move action in the first slippery square they enter. The dark naga and the cambion impalers are acrobatic enough that they automatically succeed on the Acrobatics check, but the fell troll might slip if it's unlucky.

Shallow Water: The squares marked as shallow water are difficult terrain.

Deep Water: This water is between 5 and 6 feet deep. It's considered difficult terrain, and creatures trying to fight in a deep water square suffer the penalties and restrictions of aquatic combat (described on p. 45 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Characters who can keep their heads above water (all but dwarves, halflings, and similar creatures) can walk on the bottom of the pool rather than swimming with the Athletics skill, if they wish.

Current: The map squares marked with arrows have a strong current, as described on p. 45 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. At the start of each player's turn, the current slides the character 2 squares in the direction of the arrow. A creature can choose to fight the current by spending two squares of movement (to slide only 1 square) or four squares of movement (to negate the slide). A creature need not take a move action right away, but when it takes a move action later in its turn, it moves either 2 or 4 squares less. A creature that wants to travel in the current's direction need do nothing, of course—the slide 2 at the beginning of the turn is essentially free movement.



C2: Cavern of Cliffs

Encounter Level 21 (15,250 XP)

Setup

1 war devil (W)
1 storm devil (S)
3 barbed devils (B)

The Cavern of Cliffs is home to devils betrayed into long-term servitude to Arantor. They order around the cambions when something needs to be done on the surface, but mostly they remain in this chamber and bemoan the treachery of fate.

When the PCs can see clearly into the chamber, read:

This room has a high, vaulted ceiling, and luminous lichen in the upper reaches illuminate crystalline stalactites, some more than five feet in diameter, hanging from the ceiling. The stalactites seem to catch and hold the light, glowing from within.

Before you and to the left is a cliff that rises about 30 feet along the left wall and 60 feet straight ahead of you, To the right is the lip of a clifftop. From your vantage point at the entrance, you can't see how far down it goes.

Perception Check

DC 25: *You see the head of a barbed devil peeking over the edge of the center cliff, some 60 feet above you. It darts back beyond the edge after a moment.*

Dungeoneering Check

DC 24: *The stalactites are incredibly rare locracite crystal formations, renowned both for their beauty and their fragility. Their grip on the ceiling is far more tenuous than a standard stalactite.*

When the barbed devils spot the heroes, they motion to the war devil and storm devil, who creep closer to the edge and prepare for battle.

Tactics

Because they can all fly or teleport, the devils have the advantage in this terrain. Yet because the war devil and storm devil are clumsy flyers (thus taking a –4 penalty on attacks and damage while airborne), it's not as big of an advantage as it seems.

Storm Devil: The storm devil has little reason to engage in melee—not when it can use *lightning fork* and *infernal thunderclap* from a safe distance. The push from *infernal thunderclap* can send a PC over a cliff edge. A character who succeeds at a saving throw doesn't go over the cliff and instead is prone at the cliff edge.

Barbed Devils: The barbed devils are a little overmatched compared to the PCs statistically, but they're versatile combatants. Make sure they're doing what the PCs don't want them to. In general, they should be in melee, where they can use their *barbed aura* and their minor-action shift 3. If the PCs prefer to trade attacks from a distance, the barbed devils can reply with *hurl flame* (subject to recharge, of course). Don't forget that the barbed devils can teleport around the chamber and once per fight deal damage when they do so.

War Devil: The ideal position for the war devil is at the edge of a cliff, because then it can send PCs plummeting off the edge (subject to a saving throw) with each trident attack. That leaves the war devil vulnerable in return to push and slide attacks from the PCs, but that's good drama at the table, and the war devil can rejoin the fray after a fall without too much trouble.

At the start of each war devil turn, consider what you'll do with your minor action: use *besiege foe* to mark a PC (preferably one far away and beset by barbed devils) or *fiendish tactics* if it's recharged (to grant extra attacks to other devils). Also, ask yourself whether there's a tricky way that the war devil can use *devilish transposition*, such as if the PCs have the storm devil or one of the barbed devils surrounded. Powers like this give the monsters an "action advantage:" they use only one action to accomplish two things (in this case, moving the war devil into a target-rich environment while rescuing a more vulnerable monster).

Don't forget to make recharge rolls. All three monsters have recharging powers, and the war devil has two.

Storm Devil (S) **Level 23 Artillery**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 5,100

Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +17; darkvision
HP 169; **Bloodied** 84
AC 37; **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 33
Resist 20 fire, 20 lightning, 20 thunder
Speed 7, fly 7 (clumsy)

Trident (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Lightning, Weapon**
+26 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 8 damage, and ongoing 10 lightning damage, and the target is dazed (save ends both).

Lightning Fork (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Lightning**
Requires trident; ranged 20; +28 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 8 lightning damage.

Infernal Thunderclap (Standard, recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Lightning**
Area burst 2 within 20; +26 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 6 lightning and thunder damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares from the origin square and dazed until the end of its next turn.

Cyclone (Free, when first bloodied, encounter)
The storm devil shifts 3 squares, and any Medium or smaller enemy adjacent to the storm devil at the start of the move is knocked prone.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal
Skills Stealth +23
Str 20 (+16) **Dex** 25 (+18) **Wis** 22 (+17)
Con 25 (+18) **Int** 16 (+14) **Cha** 17 (+14)
Equipment trident

3 Barbed Devils (B) **Level 18 Skirmisher**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 2,000 each

Initiative +17 **Senses** Perception +11; darkvision
Threatening Barbs aura 1; any creature in the aura that makes a melee attack or a close attack with the weapon keyword against the barbed devil takes 5 damage.
HP 170; **Bloodied** 85
AC 33; **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 29
Resist 20 fire
Speed 7, teleport 7

Claw (Standard, at-will)
+23 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage.

Double Attack (Standard, at-will)
The barbed devil makes two *claw* attacks.

Hurl Flame (Standard, recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fire**
Ranged 5; +21 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 6 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage, and the target is dazed (save ends both).

Barbed Teleport (Standard, encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
Close burst 1; +23 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage, and the barbed devil teleports 7 squares.

Infernal Bound (Minor, at-will)
The barbed devil shifts 3 squares.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal
Skills Athletics +21, Intimidate +19
Str 25 (+16) **Dex** 23 (+15) **Wis** 15 (+11)
Con 18 (+13) **Int** 12 (+10) **Cha** 20 (+14)

War Devil (Malebranche) (W) **Level 22 Brute (Leader)**
Large immortal humanoid (devil) XP 4150

Initiative +17 **Senses** Perception +15
HP 255; **Bloodied** 127
AC 35; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 30
Resist 30 fire
Speed 8, fly 8 (clumsy)

Claw (Standard, at-will)
+26 vs. AC; 1d6 + 8 damage.

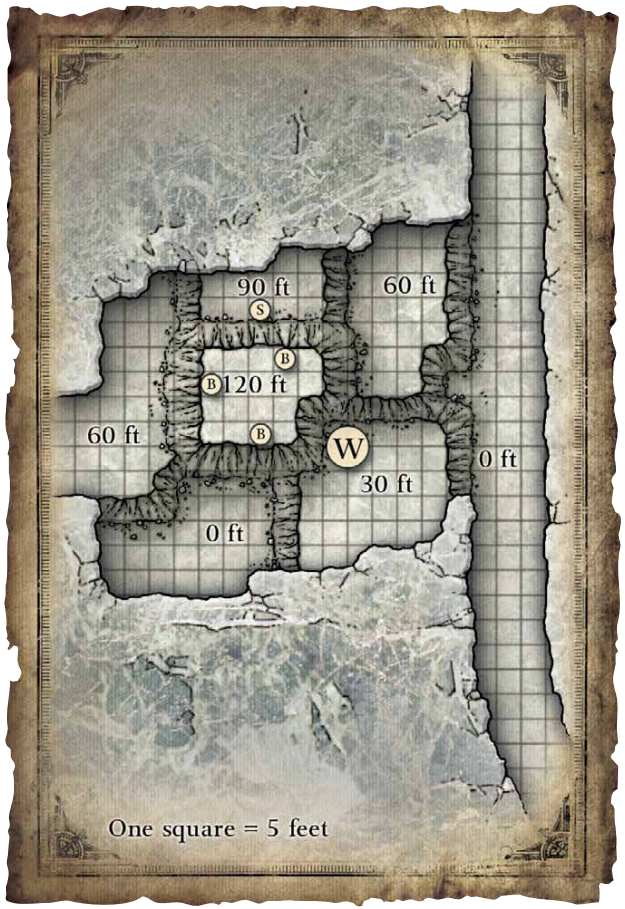
Trident (Standard, recharge ⚁ ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +26 vs. AC; 4d8 + 8 damage and ongoing 5 damage (save ends), and the target slides into any square adjacent to the war devil and is knocked prone.

Besieged Foe (Minor, at-will)
Ranged sight; the war devil marks an enemy; allies of the war devil gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls made against the target until the encounter ends or the war devil marks a new target.

Devilish Transposition (Move, at-will) ✦ **Teleportation**
Ranged 20; the war devil and an allied devil within range swap positions.

Fiendish Tactics (Minor, recharge ⚄ ⚅)
Ranged 10; affects up to 2 allied devils of the war devil's level or lower; each target can take a move action or make a basic attack.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal
Skills Intimidate +20
Str 27 (+19) **Dex** 23 (+17) **Wis** 19 (+15)
Con 25 (+18) **Int** 15 (+13) **Cha** 18 (+15)
Equipment trident



Features of the Area:

Illumination: If the PCs bring any light source into the room, the entire chamber is brightly lit. The locracite stalactites transmit the light throughout the chamber and even seem to magnify its intensity.

Ceiling: The ceiling of the cavern is 90 feet above the ledge where the PCs start, which means it's 30 feet from the highest elevation in the chamber.

Cliffs: It takes a DC 15 Athletics check to ascend these cliffs at half speed, granting combat advantage during the climb, as described on p. 182 of the *Player's Handbook*. Creatures that take damage while climbing must immediately make a DC 15 Athletics check (DC 20 if the damage made the climber bloodied) or fall. Creatures about to fall—usually because they failed an Athletics check—can, as an immediate action, attempt a DC 20 Athletics check (with an additional +1 DC per point of damage) to make a last-ditch grab at the cliff face. Failing this second Athletics check sends the character tumbling down the cliff.

Stalactites: The locracite formations on the ceiling catch and magnify the light, but they're dangerous as well as beautiful. Any attack with the thunder keyword that deals at least 10 damage causes some of the stalactites to burst. Everyone in the chamber immediately hears the crystalline stalactites shattering like glass. At the start of the next round, jagged shards rain down on everyone in the chamber, making a +28 attack against Reflex that deals 2d10 + 10 damage. This may count as a "friendly fire" incident as described under The Sting of Betrayal on page 10.

Any intentional attack (such as someone aiming an arrow at a stalactite) automatically hits. If the attack deals at least 10 damage, then shards rain down at the start of the next round. There are enough locracite formations on the ceiling to sustain four such attacks.

C3: Cavern of Sulfur

Encounter Level 22 (18,600 XP)

Setup

1 abhorrent reaper (A)
2 betrayer wights (B)
Sulfur trap

This chamber is home to some of Arantor's loyal (for this place, anyway) undead. They claim this chamber as their own because the toxic fumes make it uninhabitable for anyone not immune to poison.

When the PCs reach the entrance to the chamber, read:

You've been smelling something foul and rotten as you approached this chamber, and now you have some idea why. There's a cone-shaped formation—like a volcano, only about 5 feet tall—in the center of a pool in this cavern. Scattered around the periphery are smaller volcano-like cones, each only 2 or 3 feet high and surrounded by chunks of rock.

Along the right wall are two clawed undead, their eyes glowing with hate as they shamble toward you. To the left near the back of the cavern is a black-cloaked figure wielding a scythe and floating several feet off the cavern floor.

Perception Check

DC 29: *The room smells strongly of sulfur.*

DC 33: *You can make out a light haze near one of the nearer cones.*

Dungeoneering Check

DC 29: *Concentrations of sulfur are frequently poisonous, but the poison dissipates rather quickly in a large cavern like this.*

At the start of every turn, the geyser cone in the middle of the room spouts scalding water. But the real danger in the room—other than the undead, of course—are the poison-spewing sulfur cones.

Tactics

Beyond dealing with the sulfur cones, the PCs must deal with a cohesive trio of monsters that have every reason to stick together and focus their efforts. Ideally, this battle resolves into a slugfest right next to one of the sulfur cones. If that's the case, the monsters can exact a grim toll from the PCs for passage through this chamber.

Betrayer Wights: These are simple brutes, but it's worth paying close attention to the weakened condition on the claw attack—that's where this monster gets its oomph. Track which PCs are weakened, and remember to give the betrayer wight 15 more hit points if the PC decides to get rid of the weakened condition by spending a healing surge. Spending a healing surge is an expensive way to purge a condition that you're likely to reapply the next round anyway. A party can quickly deplete its resources if it's not willing to spend at least some time weakened during this battle. Don't forget the *death wail*. It gives the other monsters an extra basic attack, which might impose the weakened condition.

Before each betrayer wight attack, check whether the abhorrent reaper is within 5 squares, because if it is, the attack deals an extra 1d6 necrotic damage.

Abhorrent Reaper: The abhorrent reaper also gets extra basic attacks with its *bloodthirst* power, and thus more chances to weaken the PCs and consume their healing surges. The reaper is quite mobile—it's fast, flies well, and has a decent charge attack—but the best place for it is right between the two betrayer wights. *Umbral phantasm* is an important (and frustrating) part of the reaper's damage mitigation, so use it whenever you can and remember to check for its recharge at the start of every turn.

Features of the Area

Illumination: This cavern has only the illumination the PCs bring with them.

Ceiling: The ceiling of the cavern is 60 feet high and covered in cracks—vents that allow the sulfur in this room to percolate up to the surface, so diffused that it's barely noticeable when it reaches open air.

Geyser Cone: At the start of every turn, the geyser cone spews steam and scalding droplets of water. Make an area burst attack (+28 vs. Fortitude) against each creature in a 3-square burst from the cone; any creature hit takes 2d10 fire damage. Squares adjacent to the geyser cone are lightly obscured (as described on p. 61 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) because of the steam.

Sulfur Cone: Every round, two of the six sulfur cones will erupt, spewing poison within 2 squares (see the trap description below). The abhorrent reaper and betrayer wights are immune to poison and blithely ignore the sulfur, but they're smart enough to lure the PCs close to a sulfur cone if they can.

Debris: The debris around each sulfur cone is difficult terrain.

Shallow Water: The water is difficult terrain. It's uncomfortably hot but not actually damaging.

It's also poisonous; a creature that drinks the water takes 2d10 + 5 poison damage and ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends, probably when the incautious PC retches the water back up).

Abhorrent Reaper (A) Level 23 Elite Soldier (Leader)
Large shadow humanoid (undead) XP 10,200
Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +14; darkvision
Aura of Ruin aura 5; any ally within the aura deals 1d6 extra necrotic damage with melee attacks.
HP 424; **Bloodied** 212
AC 40; **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 36
Immune disease, fear, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8, fly 12 (hover)
Action Points 1
Abhorrent Sickle (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Necrotic, Weapon**
Reach 2; +30 vs. AC; 3d6 + 8 necrotic damage.
Hateful Charge (Standard; usable only when charging, at-will) ✦ **Necrotic, Weapon**
Requires sickle; +30 vs. AC; 3d6 + 8 necrotic damage, and the target is knocked prone and is immobilized until the end of the abhorrent reaper's next turn.
Hate's Cleave (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Necrotic, Weapon**
Requires sickle; +28 vs. AC; 6d6 + 8 necrotic damage.
Bloodthirst
When an abhorrent reaper bloodies an enemy, one of the abhorrent reaper's allies can make a melee basic attack against the bloodied creature as a free action.
Umbral Phantasm (Immediate Interrupt, when the abhorrent reaper would take damage, recharge ⚄ ⚅)
The abhorrent reaper becomes insubstantial until it attacks or until the end of its next turn.
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Intimidate +23
Str 27 (+19) **Dex** 21 (+16) **Wis** 16 (+14)
Con 20 (+16) **Int** 18 (+15) **Cha** 24 (+18)
Equipment robes, sickle

2 Betrayer Wights (B) Level 21 Brute
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 3,200 each
Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +5; darkvision
HP 244; **Bloodied** 122
AC 33; **Fortitude** 36, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 32
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 20 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant
Speed 7
Claw (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Healing, Necrotic**
+24 vs. AC; 2d8 + 9 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened. To end the weakened condition, the target must spend a healing surge (a free action). If the target does so, the wight regains 15 hit points.
Death Wail (when reduced to 0 hit points) ✦ **Necrotic**
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +21 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 7 necrotic damage. Undead allies in the burst can make a basic attack as a free action.
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common
Str 28 (+19) **Dex** 22 (+16) **Wis** 6 (+8)
Con 24 (+17) **Int** 8 (+9) **Cha** 20 (+15)

Sulfur Spewers Level 18 Blaster
Hazard XP 2,000
Hazard: This cavern is close to a sulfur vent deep underground, and the cinder cones marked on the map periodically emit poisonous clouds of sulfur
Perception:
✦ DC 29: The room smells strongly of sulfur.
✦ DC 33: A lingering haze near the cinder cones marks where the sulfur is strongest.
Additional Skill: Dungeoneering
✦ DC 29: Concentrations of sulfur are frequently poisonous, but the poison dissipates rather quickly in a large cavern such as this.
Trigger: At the start of each turn, roll 1d6 twice. The indicated cinder cones emit a cloud of poisonous sulfur.
Attack
Standard Action **Close** burst 2
Target: All living creatures within the area
Attack: +21 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d10 + 5 poison damage and ongoing 10 poison (save ends)
Miss: Half damage.

C4: Cavern of Air

Encounter Level 22 (18,400 XP)

Setup

1 void lich (V)
2 callers in darkness (C)
1 tormenting ghost (T)

This chamber is another chance for the PCs to employ their flying and Athletics skills as they battle a quartet of undead on floating platforms of stone.

When the PCs reach the cavern entrance, read:

Safe passage through this cavern ends almost as soon as you set foot inside, for the passageway opens into a cavern from high on one of the cavern walls. You can see another platform about 50 feet southeast of you on the far wall with two passages exiting the cavern. Between you and that other platform is empty, dark space. Floating like islands in that dark space are rock platforms, each several feet thick.

As you watch, the islands creep from side to side, slowly enough that you can jump from one to another but rapidly enough that in a few minutes, the platforms will be thoroughly shuffled.

A ghost in tattered finery hovers directly above one of the larger islands, beckoning you closer.

Characters can see at least 100 feet from their own light source:

Automatic: *The rocky stone floor is about 100 feet below you.*

Perception Check

DC 23: *There are two dark clouds hovering near the ceiling, one over each of the largest islands.*

The dark clouds are callers in darkness. A void lich waits around the corner. It will appear the round after it hears sounds of battle.

Tactics

The beckoning on the part of the tormenting ghost is just a ruse to draw the PCs onto the floating islands, where the terrain is more advantageous to the monsters (and more interesting for the DM).

Tormenting Ghost: Use the *burst of terror* attack to force PCs off the islands and *ghostly possession* against PCs with effective ranged attacks. Use *spectral shift* whenever an adventurer misses with an attack. *Ghostly terrain*, while effective, probably distracts from the fun of this encounter, so use it only when you see a truly great opportunity.

Callers In Darkness: Use *advantage of fear* and *steal essence* as often as possible, resorting to *spirit bites* only when you can't reach the marked character. Keep track of which caller has which character marked, and make sure you apply the conditions for failed saving throws.

Void Lich: The void lich arrives in the second round of the fight, alights on an unoccupied island, then attacks with *void tendrils* every round. Eventually this will attract a hero's attention. If engaged in melee, the void lich uses *frightful gaze* (especially if its enemy isn't flying and might get pushed off the island) or *hideous laughter*. *Fade to dusk* and *phase step* should be sufficient to get the void lich out of harm's way.

Tormenting Ghost (T)		**Level 21 Controller**
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)		XP 3,200
Initiative +19	**Senses** Perception +17; darkvision	
HP 152; **Bloodied** 76		
AC 32; **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 32		
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** insubstantial		
Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing		
Spirit Touch (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**		
+24 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 9 necrotic damage.		
Ghostly Possession (Standard, recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Charm**		
Target must be a living humanoid; +24 vs. Will; the tormenting ghost enters the target's space and is removed from play, and the target is dominated (save ends). The tormenting ghost can use this power against only one creature at a time. When the target is no longer dominated, or when the tormenting ghost chooses to end its *ghostly possession* (a free action), the ghost reappears in a square adjacent to the target.		
Burst of Terror (Standard, recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fear, Necrotic**		
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +24 vs. Will; 1d8 + 9 necrotic damage, the target is pushed 5 squares, and the target is dazed and immobilized (save ends both).		
Ghostly Terrain (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**		
Area burst 1 within 10; the area is suddenly filled with ghostly lights, wisps of necrotic mist, and the faint whispers of the dead. The area becomes difficult terrain and lightly obscured. Any creature that enters or ends its turn in the area is immobilized (save ends). The ghostly terrain remains in place for 5 minutes before fading away.		
Spectral Shift (immediate reaction, when missed by a melee attack, at-will)		
The tormenting ghost shifts 3 squares.		
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common	
Skills Stealth +24		
Str 11 (+10)	**Dex** 28 (+19)	**Wis** 14 (+12)
Con 20 (+15)	**Int** 12 (+11)	**Cha** 25 (+17)

Void Lich (V) **Level 20 Elite Lurker**
Medium aberrant humanoid (undead) XP 5,600

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +18; darkvision
Shroud of Night aura 5; bright light within the aura is reduced to dim light, and dim light within the aura is reduced to darkness (if the void lich takes radiant damage, the aura is negated until the end of the void lich's next turn).
HP 296; **Bloodied** 148
AC 34; **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 34
Immune disease, poison, fear; **Resist** 10 necrotic
Saving Throws +2
Speed 4, fly 8 (hover)
Action Points 1

Life Trap (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Healing Necrotic**
+23 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 7 necrotic damage, and the void lich regains 15 hit points.

Void Tendrils (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Ranged 10; +23 vs. Will; 2d6 + 7 necrotic damage, and the target is knocked prone and dazed (save ends).

Frightful Gaze (Minor, at-will) ✦ **Fear, Gaze**
Close blast 3; +21 vs. Will; the target is pushed 5 squares and takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw*: The target is dazed, immobilized, and takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends all).

Hideous Laughter (Minor, recharges when the void lich bloodies an enemy) ✦ **Fear, Psychic**
Close blast 3; +21 vs. Will; 2d8 + 7 psychic damage, and the target takes a -5 penalty to all defenses until the end of the void lich's next turn.

Fade to Dusk (Minor, recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞)
The void lich becomes insubstantial and invisible until it attacks or until the end of its next turn.

Phase Step (Minor, at-will)
The void lich teleports up to 2 squares.

Indestructible
When a void lich is reduced to 0 hit points, its body and possessions dissipate into wisps of darkness, but it is not destroyed. It reappears (along with its possessions) in 1d10 days within 1 square of its phylactery, unless the phylactery is also found and destroyed.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech, telepathy 10
Skills Arcana +22, Intimidate +20
Str 16 (+13) **Dex** 17 (+13) **Wis** 26 (+18)
Con 22 (+16) **Int** 24 (+17) **Cha** 20 (+15)

2 Callers in Darkness (C) **Level 19 Elite Soldier**
Large shadow animate (undead) XP 4,800 each

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +16; darkvision
HP 253; **Bloodied** 126
AC 33; **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 33
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** insubstantial
Saving Throws +2
Speed fly 8 (hover); phasing
Action Points 1

Spirit Bite (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Necrotic, Psychic**
Reach 2; +23 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 necrotic damage, and ongoing 10 psychic damage (save ends).

Double Bite (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Necrotic, Psychic**
The caller in darkness makes two *spirit bite* attacks.

Steal Essence (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Necrotic, Psychic**
Reach 2; targets a creature marked by the caller in darkness; +22 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 9 necrotic damage, and ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* The target takes ongoing 5 psychic damage and is weakened (save ends both). *Second Failed Saving Throw:* The target takes ongoing 10 psychic damage and is stunned instead of weakened (save ends both).

Advantage of Fear (Minor 1/round, at-will) ✦ **Fear**
Close burst 10; targets one creature; the target is marked and grants combat advantage to the caller in darkness (save ends both); see also *steal essence*.

Soulstorm (Free, when first bloodied, encounter) ✦ **Necrotic, Psychic**
Close burst 2; +22 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 9 psychic damage plus 1d10 + 9 necrotic damage. In addition, a target that grants combat advantage to the caller in darkness takes ongoing 5 psychic damage and ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends both).

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common
Str 24 (+16) **Dex** 18 (+13) **Wis** 24 (+16)
Con 21 (+14) **Int** 10 (+9) **Cha** 25 (+16)

Features of the Area:

Illumination: The chamber's upper reaches, where most of the action takes place, are unlit. Phosphorescent lichen near the cavern floor makes it obvious to the characters that it's a long way down. Within 5 squares of the void lich, bright light becomes dim light and dim light becomes darkness.

Ceiling: The ceiling of the cavern is 150 feet high (20 feet higher than the floating islands).

Floating Islands: The islands marked on the map float laterally at the start of each turn. Roll 1d8 for each island; 1 means it drifts 1 square north, 2 means 1 square northeast, 3 is east, and so on. The islands don't change altitude.

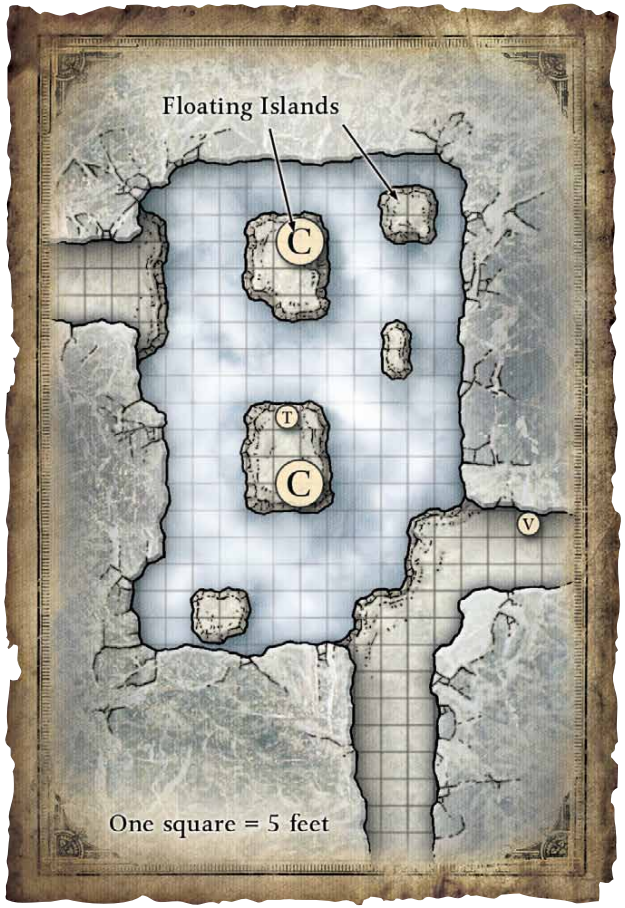
Besides drifting, the islands are fragile. Sufficient force (a powerful attack or a collision with another island) is enough to break them apart. If two islands bump together (occupy adjacent squares), a few pebbles fall ominously to the cavern floor. If a floating island rolls movement that would make any part of it overlap with another island, then it breaks into two pieces. Let your sense of creative verve decide where the break happens, either splitting up combatants or keeping them together as you see fit. Roll 1d8 a second time for movement for one of the two "daughter" islands—it doesn't matter which—to get some separation between the two daughters (continue rolling until a result causes the second piece to move away from the first). Likewise, if a close or area attack deals at least 20 damage and covers at least half of an island, break the island apart. Judge

for yourself whether a particular attack is unlikely to damage the stones: a close attack with thrown daggers, for example, probably could be ignored in this case. Collisions with the cavern walls usually don't make the islands break apart, but if nothing has cracked in half for several turns or you're really itching to stir things up, then either assign a chance for a wall collision to damage a platform or just declare that one breaks.

Cavern Floor: From the floating islands to the cavern floor is a fall of 130 feet onto a pile of rubble—chunks of rock that abraded off the floating islands in the past. The floor is difficult terrain throughout. The only feature of interest down there is the bound island (described below).

Bound Island: Floating a few feet above the cavern floor is a 3-square by 3-square island, moored to the ground with a rope. A creature with no other way to rejoin the fray can untie the rope, and the island will rise at the start of the next turn into any available space at the same altitude as the other islands.

The players are unlikely to learn this, but over time, the rubble on the cavern floor coheres into new floating islands that ascend to take the place of those that have been ground apart through collisions. It's a natural (though rare) process in this domain, but Noorikhan the void lich has been experimenting with it. The bound island is one of his trials.



C5: Cavern of Truth

Encounter Level 22 (19,200 XP)

Setup

1 rakshasa noble huecava (H)
3 rakshasa destroyers (D)
1 gray render (G)

This cavern exists to punish those who've angered Arantor, coerce betrayal from pawns in Arantor's schemes, and to provide a measure of cruel amusement during Arantor's long periods of melancholy.

When the PCs reach the cavern entrance, read:

The purpose of this cavern is clear: imprisonment, torture, and execution. Along the side walls are prison cages fashioned from unnaturally smooth stalagmites. Three are empty, and the fourth one, in the southeastern corner, has a grayish giant within it. A guillotine stands in the center of the room with its blade raised, iron maidens are immediately to your left and right, and wooden stretching racks are arrayed on the far end of the chamber. Two passages exit the far end of the room.

A groove has been cut in the floor, connecting the iron maidens, the guillotine, and the center of the southern wall, which bears a fresco of eladrin lords and ladies gazing out upon a pastoral lake.

Two bipedal tiger-creatures are fiddling with the guillotine mechanism. A third such creature stands near the rack in the southwest part of the room.

Perception Check

DC 25: *The floor of the room is slightly sloped. The iron maidens are at the higher end and the fresco on the south wall is lower.*

DC 30: *It looks as if there's someone on the southwest rack. It could be human but it's hard to tell at this distance.*

There is indeed a human on the rack, a denizen of the shantytown named Macaebus. The creature "imprisoned" in the southeast cage is a gray render that the rakshasas captured from the surrounding jungle and domesticated through pitiless torture.

Tactics

This battle will be more fun for everyone involved if it spreads out a bit. That will let the PCs feel the frustration of being marked (for a change) and give the gray render room to work.

Rakshasa Noble Huecuva: The huecuva hangs back and uses its three potent ranged attacks (*mind twist*, *phantom lure*, and *frightful phantom*) to either damage the PCs directly or act as a puppet master, spreading the PCs out and moving them into disadvantageous positions. If confronted in melee, the huecuva uses *unholy claw* and then *phantom image*. *Unholy claw* deals damage to all adjacent living creatures, possibly including the rakshasa destroyers and the gray render. The huecuva won't hesitate to use *unholy claw* anyway, which may trigger a friendly fire incident as described in The Sting of Betrayal (page 10).

Rakshasa Noble Huecuva (H) Level 19 Elite Controller
Medium natural humanoid XP 4,800

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +19; low-light vision
HP 356; **Bloodied** 178
Regeneration 5 (damage from silver weapons negates regeneration until the end of the rakshasa noble huecuva's next turn)
AC 33; **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 34
Saving Throws +2
Speed 7 **Action Points** 1

Unholy Claw (Standard, at-will)
+24 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends). When the target takes ongoing necrotic damage from this power, all adjacent living creatures take 5 necrotic damage.

Mind Twist (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 20; +23 vs. Will; 3d6 + 7 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Phantom Lure (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Charm**
Ranged 10; +22 vs. Will; the target slides 5 squares.

Frightful Phantom (Standard, recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fear**
Ranged 5; +23 vs. Will; 4d8 + 7 psychic damage, the target is pushed 5 squares, and the target is stunned (save ends).

Deceptive Veil (Minor, at-will) ✦ **Illusion**
The rakshasa noble huecuva can disguise itself to appear as any Medium humanoid. A successful Insight check (opposed by the rakshasa's Bluff check) pierces the disguise.

Phantom Image (Minor, recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Illusion**
Until the end of the rakshasa noble huecuva's next turn, any creature that attacks the rakshasa's AC or Reflex defense must roll twice and use the lower attack roll result. If either result is a critical hit, use that result instead.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Arcana +20, Athletics +17, Bluff +21, Diplomacy +21, History +20, Insight +19, Intimidate +21

Str 16 (+12)	**Dex** 20 (+14)	**Wis** 20 (+14)
Con 18 (+13)	**Int** 22 (+15)	**Cha** 24 (+16)

Rakshasa Destroyers: At the start of the fight, one of the destroyers moves to the stalagmite cage holding the gray render, then uses a minor action to pull the lever and cause the stalagmites to drop into the floor. The destroyers make *triple attacks* as often as they can (with *longsword*, that means six attack rolls). They mark different opponents and try to draw them apart. Use *knight's move* occasionally to make a marked PC chase the destroyer around the battlefield.

Gray Render: The gray render joins the battle the round after one of the rakshasas releases it from its cage. It makes *claw* attacks, trying to always have a character grabbed. While it has a PC grabbed, it uses *body swap* whenever possible and *dismembering bite* on its own turn. If the gray render is bloodied and opponents are proving adept at escaping its grab, it switches tactics to doing double attacks every round, knocking PCs prone and dealing ongoing damage each time.

3 Rakshasa Destroyers (D) **Level 21 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid XP 3,200 each

Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +20; low-light vision
HP 196; **Bloodied** 98
AC 37; **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 35
Speed 6

⊕ **Longsword** (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
The rakshasa destroyer makes two attack rolls and keeps the better result; +26 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the rakshasa's next turn.

⊕ **Claw** (Standard, at-will)
+26 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage.

⸸ **Triple Attack** (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
The rakshasa destroyer makes three melee basic attacks. If two or more attacks hit the same target, that target is dazed (save ends).

Deceptive Veil (Minor, at-will) ✦ **Illusion**
The rakshasa destroyer can disguise itself to appear as any Medium humanoid. A successful Insight check (opposed by the rakshasa's Bluff check) pierces the disguise.

Knight's Move (Move, recharge ⚄ ⚅)
The rakshasa destroyer can fly up to 6 squares. It must land at the end of this move or else it crashes.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Athletics +22, Bluff +19, Insight +20, Intimidate +19
Str 25 (+17) **Dex** 19 (+14) **Wis** 21 (+15)
Con 20 (+15) **Int** 15 (+12) **Cha** 18 (+14)
Equipment heavy shield, longsword, scale armor

Gray Render (G) **Level 19 Elite Brute**
Large natural humanoid XP 4,800

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +15; blindsight 10
HP 452; **Bloodied** 226
AC 31; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 28
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8
Action Points 1

⊕ **Claw** (Standard, at-will)
Reach 2; +22 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 damage, and the target is grabbed.

⸸ **Double Attack** (Standard, at-will)
The gray render makes two *claw* attacks. If both attacks hit the same target, the target takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

⸸ **Body Swap** (Immediate Reaction, when the gray render is hit by an enemy's melee attack while the gray render has a creature grabbed; requires a grabbed creature, at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
The gray render uses the grabbed creature as a weapon; targets the triggering enemy; +20 vs. Reflex; 2d12 + 8 damage, and the gray render pushes the target 4 squares. The grabbed creature takes half the damage dealt by this attack.

⸸ **Dismembering Bite** (Standard, encounter)
Targets a creature grabbed by the gray render; +20 vs. Fortitude; 3d12 + 8 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Rampage (while bloodied)
The gray render's *claw* attack also knocks a target prone.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** –
Skills Athletics +23
Str 27 (+17) **Dex** 13 (+10) **Wis** 15 (+11)
Con 26 (+17) **Int** 2 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+9)

Features of the Area:

Illumination: Everburning torches in wall sconces provide bright illumination throughout this room.

Ceiling: The ceiling of the cavern is 20 feet high.

Stalagmite Cages: These "cages" are formed from obviously unnatural stalagmites that rise nearly to the ceiling. The gaps between them are small: an inch or two near the bottom, approximately a foot near the ceiling. Just outside the ring forming the cage is a foot-tall stalagmite that functions as a lever. When someone pulls the lever, the other stalagmites retract into the cave floor.

Three of the stalagmite cages are unoccupied. The southeastern one has a trained gray render in it.

Iron Maidens: These are typical torture equipment.

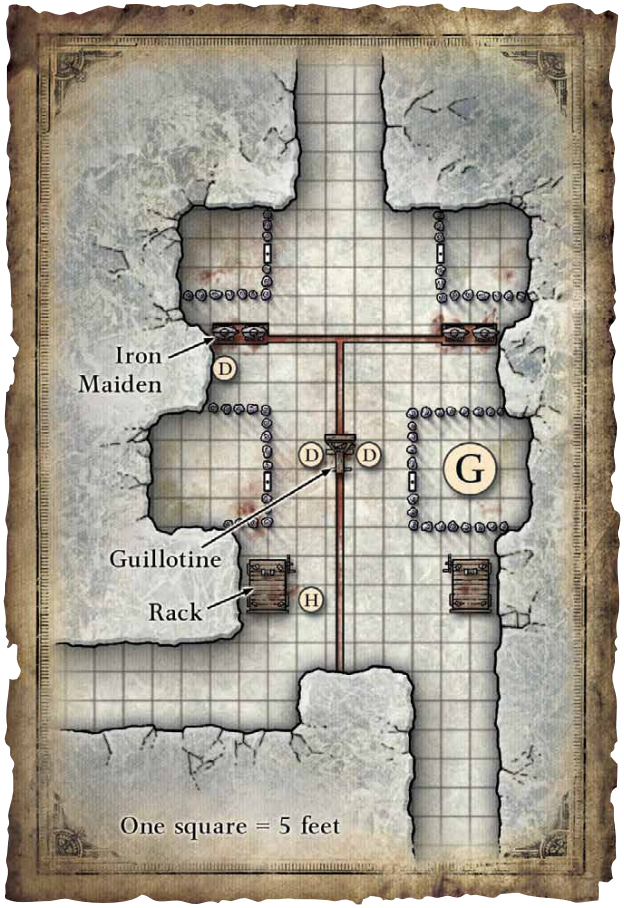
Guillotine: The guillotine is in the "up" position and held by a thin cord. Of course, it will fall if someone moves (or is slid, pulled, or pushed) through the guillotine opening (+28 vs. Reflex; 8d8 + 20 damage). Winching the guillotine blade back into the "up" position takes eight turns, so hit or miss, this trick is likely to work only once.

Rack: The rack is typical medieval torture fare, but it's notable for two reasons. First, it's occupied by a villager named Macaebus (described on page 16). Second, two Masks of the Beloved (described in the treasure section) hang on pegs on the rack's frame.

Blood Channels: The channels cut into the floor are designed to keep the floor of this torture chamber clean—and they do their job almost too well. Each time a creature on or adjacent to a blood channel takes damage from an attack that draws blood (most weapon attacks, for example), everyone in the chamber will see the blood flow into the channel of its own volition. Once blood is in the channel, it spreads along the channel toward the south wall at the rate of 1 square per turn (at initiative count 1). Use tokens to mark which squares have blood in them. Creatures adjacent to a token at the start of their turn take 5 damage but score critical hits on 19-20 (unless their critical chance is already better than that) until the start of their next turn.

South Wall Mosaic: If blood in the channel reaches the south wall, the eladrins in the picture transform into tieflings and the landscape in the mosaic transforms into a charred wasteland with a magma lake. Note that if blood has flowed into the channel then it will reach the wall before long unless characters specifically take action to stop it.

Macaebus: See page 16.



C6: Cavern of Statues

Encounter Level 22 (16,300 XP)

Setup

1 cambion soul conflagrant (C)
2 cambion legionnaires (L)
2 nothic mindblights (N)

One of only two upper chambers that Arantor regularly visits (the Cavern of Truth is the other), the Cavern of Statues is a gallery containing certain antiquities that remind Arantor of life before coming to Monadhan. Although most of Arantor's hoard lies in the lower cavern, some of the items here are bulky but valuable indeed.

When the PCs reach the cavern entrance, read:

This room is home to seven large statues, all larger than life. Between them hang tattered tapestries that show maps in sable, snow-cotton, and golden wool. A brazier near the center statue—that of a dragon in a rampant pose—casts everything in a reddish light.

Standing near the dragon statue are three cambions, one with an iron-shod quarterstaff and two with short swords and shields.

Two passages exit the room at the northeast corner.

Perception Check

DC 29: *You hear flapping footsteps—not boots, but skin on stone—coming from one of the northern passageways.*

The silver dragon statue depicts Arantor as he existed in life, and the other statues are figures important to him (some of whom will figure in later *Scales of War* adventures). The map tapestries likewise have information useful in the PCs' future endeavors.

Tactics

Unlike battles that spread the PCs out (such as C4 and C5), this encounter should develop into a big, confusing scrum because of the short ranges and dominated PCs. This is also the battle most likely to have friendly fire incidents which trigger Monadhan's blessing.

Cambion Soul Conflagrant: The leader of the cambions that serve Arantor, the soul congflagrant wants nothing to do with melee. Instead, it hangs back as far as it can. Each round it uses one of its three ranged attacks, in order of priority: *purge the soul*, *soulscorch*, *hellfire ray*. *Soulscorch* might hurt the other cambions (who have resist fire 15); if it does, the soul conflagrant gains the benefits of a "friendly fire" incident, as described in The Sting of Betrayal on page 10. Like most cambions, the soul conflagrant is a clumsy flyer and would rather land each turn than suffer the -4 penalty to attacks and damage for attacking while airborne.

Cambion Soul Conflagrant (C)	**Level 23 Artillery**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)	XP 5,100
Initiative +16	**Senses** Perception +15; darkvision
HP 166; **Bloodied** 83	
AC 35 (38 against ranged attacks); **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 34 (38 against ranged attacks), **Will** 36	
Resist 15 fire	
Speed 6, fly 8 (clumsy)	
⊕ **Staff** (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+28 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage.	
✈ **Hellfire Ray** (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Fire**	
Ranged 20; +28 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 8 fire damage, and the target is knocked prone.	
✈ **Purge the Soul** (Standard, recharges when any enemy within sight is reduced to 0 hit points or fewer) ✦ **Necrotic**	
Ranged 20; +28 vs. Reflex; 4d6 + 8 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).	
✲ **Soulscorch** (Standard, recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fire**	
Area burst 1 within 10; +28 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 8 fire damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage.	
Soul Mantle	
A mantle of soul energy protects the cambion soul conflagrant, giving it a +4 bonus to AC and Reflex defense against ranged attacks (already included in its statistics).	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Arcana +22, Bluff +24, Diplomacy +24	
Str 14 (+13)	**Dex** 20 (+16) **Wis** 19 (+15)
Con 22 (+17)	**Int** 22 (+17) **Cha** 27 (+19)
Equipment robes, quarterstaff	

Cambion Legionnaire: The two legionnaires stay close to each other (to benefit from the *legion's mantle* power) and try to establish a front line that keeps enemy melee combatants away from the cambion soul conflagrant. They prefer to make *gladius* attacks; keep track of how many hit, because those hits charge up the push function of the *shield rush*. The legionnaires save their *immolate* attacks for moments when they can get at least two and preferably three figures within the area. Cambions have only resist 15 to fire, so it's possible that the legionnaires will damage each other with their *immolate* attacks. That constitutes a "friendly fire" incident, as described in The Sting of Betrayal section on page 10.

Nothic Mindblights: The nothics hop into the fray, appearing at one of the northern passages at the start of round 2. They use their *eye of insanity* attacks until they have a PC dominated, then use *necrotic eye* or *mesmerizing visage* until the character shakes off the domination. That recharges the *eye of insanity*, so the nothic starts the sequence all over again. Because it's a save-ends effect that includes a saving throw penalty, you'll need to keep close track of how each character is responding to *mesmerizing visage*. Like the other monsters in this encounter, the mindblights have an attack (*necrotic eye*) that might cause a "friendly fire" incident.

2 Cambion Legionnaires (L) **Level 21 Soldier**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 3,200 each

Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +20; darkvision
HP 198; **Bloodied** 99
AC 37; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 31 (35 if another cambion is within 3 squares)
Resist 15 fire
Speed 6, fly 8 (clumsy)

Gladius (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+28 vs. AC; 3d6 + 8 damage. Effect: The target is marked until the end of the legionnaire's next turn.

Shield Bash (minor; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+28 vs. AC; the cambion legionnaire pushes the target 1 square and can shift into the square the target vacates.

Immolate (standard; recharge ⚄) ✦ **Fire**
Close burst 2; +28 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 5 fire damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage.

Legion's Mantle
While the legionnaire is within 3 squares of another cambion, it gains a +4 bonus to Will defense (already included in its statistics) and a +2 bonus on saving throws.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Arcana +22, Bluff +24, Diplomacy +24
Str 14 (+13) **Dex** 20 (+16) **Wis** 19 (+15)
Con 22 (+17) **Int** 22 (+17) **Cha** 27 (+19)
Equipment short sword, light shield

2 Nothic Mindblights (N) **Level 19 Controller**
Medium aberrant humanoid XP 2,400 each

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +11; darkvision, truesight 10
HP 180; **Bloodied** 90
AC 32; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 29
Speed 6

Claw (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+24 vs. AC; 2d6 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends).

Eye of Insanity (Standard, recharges when no creature is dominated by the nothic mindblight) ✦ **Fear**
Ranged 5; +23 vs. Will; the target is dominated (save ends). *Aftereffect:* The target is dazed until the end of its next turn.

Necrotic Eye (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Close blast 5; +23 vs. Fortitude; the target takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends).

Mesmerizing Visage (Standard, recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Charm, Psychic**
Area burst 2 within 10; targets enemies; +23 vs. Will; 2d8 + 6 psychic damage, and the target takes a -1 penalty to saving throws (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* The target takes a -3 penalty to saving throws instead of -1 (save ends).

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Deep Speech
Skills Stealth +19
Str 21 (+14) **Dex** 20 (+14) **Wis** 15 (+11)
Con 20 (+14) **Int** 10 (+9) **Cha** 12 (+10)

Features of the Area:

Illumination: The brazier provides bright, reddish light throughout the chamber.

Ceiling: The ceiling of the cavern is 20 feet high.

Center Statue: This statue depicts Arantor as he once was: a proud silver dragon, ferocious in battle. Treasure parcels G and H are at the base of the statue.

Northeast Statue: This statue depicts a skeleton wearing finely embroidered robes and gaudy jewelry. The word "Irfelujhar" is carved into the base.

Southeast Statue: This statue depicts a dragonborn wearing heavy armor and wielding a falchion. The word "Mornujhar" is carved into the base.

South Statue: This is a statue of a sleek black dragon. The word "Mornujhar" is also carved into the base. This is likely to be confusing to the PCs, or make them think that when they finally meet Mornujhar (in "Grasp of the Mantled Citadel"), that he will be a black dragon in disguise. This statue is merely meant to give him honor as Tiamat's black exarch.

Southwest Statue: This statue of an old woman has crumbled into several pieces and is lying in a heap atop the pedestal. The word "Sarissa" is carved into the base. PCs who make even a token effort to put the pieces back together realize that this statue is a perfect likeness of the seer Sarissa, whom they met in Encounter T1, Seer's Hut.

West Statue: This statue depicts a female angel of secrets—one that bears a striking resemblance to the angel the heroes met in Encounter S1. The word "Niuria" is carved into the base (not Rachaela, which is the name she gave previously).

North Tapestry: This tapestry is a map of an ancient empire, with roads connecting cities, major coastlines, mountain ranges, etc. A DC 24 History check reveals that the map, while more artistic and less cartographically accurate, is of the ancient empire of Arkhosia shortly before its war with Bael Turath. The tapestries collectively constitute treasure parcel I. Even rolled up, each tapestry is a very bulky 100 pounds.

Northeast Tapestry: This tapestry map requires a DC 29 History check; it's an artistic representation of the ancient eladrin Realm of the Twin Queens.

Eastern Tapestries: This tapestry seems to be an illustrative depiction of a strange and disturbing forest. According to the caption woven into the bottom of the tapestry, it is the Forest of Twisted Souls.

South Tapestry: Another tapestry map; a DC 24 History check reveals that it represents Bael Turath.

Western Tapestry: This tapestry map requires a DC 24 History check; it's an artistic representation of the ancient human empire of Nerath.

C7: Death Giant Reinforcements

Encounter Level 23 (22,200 XP)

Setup

2 death giant dreadguards
2 death giant soulcatchers
1 steel predator

This is the first encounter to use when the PCs backtrack through a chamber they've already cleared or when they camp for an extended rest. Accordingly, it's not tied to a specific location. You can run this battle using the map for any of encounters C1–C6 or at the empty chambers at each dead end in the ever-shifting upper caverns.

When the PCs see the death giants, read:

Four dark-skinned giants are running toward you, their armor jingling and rattling as they unsheathe their weapons. Two of them have plate armor, mace, and shield, while two others are in leathers and wielding massive quarterstaffs. Behind them lopes a metallic creature shaped like a leopard but bigger than a horse.

Perception Check

DC 26: *Four flickering, crystalline shards orbit each of the giants at a distance of a few feet.*

Tactics

Three of the five monsters in this fight are able to mark the PCs. This is a prime opportunity to split the adventurers into several small groups that have a hard time supporting one another. Strive to create at least one mismatch in the monsters' advantage so that a few of the characters need rescuing while under fire before disaster falls.

Death Giant Dreadguard: The dreadguards stay close to each other and mark different PCs. Use positioning to lure the marked PCs into attacking the "wrong" dreadguard (and thus triggering *death guardian*); the death giants' reach 2 should help. They use *soul shield* whenever it can make the difference between an attack hitting or missing.

Keep careful track of each dreadguard's supply of soul shards. Add a soul shard whenever a creature (including another death giant) dies within 5 squares, and subtract a shard whenever the dreadguard uses its *soul shield* power or heals 20 hit points. Don't spend the last soul shard until the dreadguard is likely to die in the next round anyway, because a dreadguard with no soul shards suffers a –2 attack penalty.

Death Giant Soulcatchers: The soulcatchers stay behind the dreadguards and use *soul shrive* as often as they can. Each soulcatcher's aim is to accumulate seven soul shards, which will let it use *soulfury detonation* twice in a row and still have one soul shard left over (to avoid the –2 attack penalty). Soulcatchers preferentially target lightly armored PCs in the belief that they tend to have lower Fortitude defenses. *Soulfury detonation* is likely to damage any dreadguards caught in its area, which constitutes a friendly fire incident as described in The Sting of Betrayal on page 10.

The soulcatchers have two ways to earn soul shards, but they tend to spend them fast. Remind players hit with *soul shrive* that they've lost their healing surges only temporarily—they'll get the healing surges back when they make the saving throw.

Steel Predator: Like the dreadguards, the steel predator can mark PCs. As a fast elite, it can make a vicious pounce to the enemy's back ranks, then make a *bite* attack in the next round to mark a PC who's ill-suited for melee (such as a wizard or invoker), even if that means taking some opportunity attacks on the way. Thereafter, use *resonating roar* if it's available and can hit at least three targets. Otherwise, make a *bite* attack if only one PC is adjacent or *snap jaw* if there are two. When making a *snap jaw* attack, decide which PC to mark for next turn and attack that character first. This makes it more likely that the character will be right in front of the steel predator again next round, ready to be bitten.

If the steel predator focuses on PCs who are averse to melee, it's likely that they'll try to shift away during their turn. Remember that the steel predator can use *shifting steel* to keep them running around the battlefield.

2 Death Giant Dreadguards (D) **Level 22 Soldier**
Large shadow humanoid (giant) XP 4,150 each

Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +19; darkvision
Soulcatcher aura 5; a creature that dies within the aura bestows one soul shard to the dreadguard (see *soul shroud*).
HP 209; **Bloodied** 104
AC 38; **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 31
Resist 15 necrotic
Speed 7

Mace (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +29 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage and the target is marked until the end of the dreadguard's next turn.

Death Guardian (immediate interrupt, when an enemy marked by the dreadguard makes an attack that does not include the dreadguard; at-will)
The dreadguard makes a *mace* attack against the triggering enemy.

Soul Shield (free, when an ally within 5 squares is hit by an attack; at-will)
The dreadguard expends one soul shard and the ally gains a +4 bonus to defenses against the attack.

Consume Soul Shard (minor; at-will) ✦ **Healing**
The dreadguard expends one soul shard and regains 20 hit points.

Soul Shroud
The soul shroud contains soul shards that swirl around the dreadguard to protect and empower it. At the beginning of an encounter, the soul shroud contains four soul shards. While the soul shroud is depleted of soul shards, the dreadguard takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Giant
Skills Intimidate + 18
Str 28 (+20) **Dex** 20 (+16) **Wis** 16 (+14)
Con 25 (+18) **Int** 12 (+12) **Cha** 15 (+13)
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, mace

2 Death Giant Soulcatchers (S) **Level 22 Controller**
Large shadow humanoid (giant) XP 4,150 each

Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +19; darkvision
Soulsnatcher aura 10; a creature that dies within the aura bestows one soul shard to the soulcatcher (see *soul shroud*).
HP 209; **Bloodied** 104
AC 36; **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 35
Resist 15 necrotic
Speed 8

Soul Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; + 27 vs. AC; 2d6 + 8 damage and the target is immobilized until the end of the soulcatcher's next turn.

Soul Shrive (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Ranged 10; + 26 vs. Fortitude; the target is stunned and loses 1 healing surge at the start of its turn (save ends both). A target without healing surges takes damage equal to one quarter its total hit points. Each time the target loses a healing surge or takes damage from *soul shrive*, the soulcatcher gains a soul shard.

Soulfury Detonation (standard; must expend 3 soul shards; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Burst 2 within 10; +26 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 6 necrotic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Consume Soul Shard (minor; at-will) ✦ **Healing**
The soulcatcher expends one soul shard and regains 20 hit points.

Soul Shroud
The soul shroud contains soul shards that swirl around the soulcatcher to protect and empower it. At the beginning of an encounter, the soul shroud contains four soul shards. While the soul shroud is depleted of soul shards, the soulcatcher takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Giant
Skills Intimidate + 18
Str 28 (+20) **Dex** 20 (+16) **Wis** 22 (+17)
Con 25 (+18) **Int** 12 (+12 **Cha** 15 (+13)
Equipment leather armor, dagger

Steel Predator (P) **Level 20 Elite Soldier**
Large immortal animate (living construct) XP 5,600

Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +16; darkvision
HP 388; **Bloodied** 194
AC 36; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 30
Saving Throws +2 (+4 against ongoing damage)
Speed 8
Action Points 1

Bite (Standard, at-will)
Reach 2; +27 vs. AC; 4d6 + 4 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the steel predator's next turn.

Snap Jaw (Standard, at-will)
The steel predator makes a *bite* attack. On a hit, the target is also knocked prone, and the predator makes another *bite* attack against a different target.

Vicious Pounce (Standard, at-will)
The steel predator charges and makes the following attack in place of a *bite* attack; +25 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 5 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone. The predator moves into the space vacated by the target.

Resonating Roar (Standard, recharge ⚄ ⚅ or when the steel predator takes thunder or lightning damage) ✦ **Thunder**
Close burst 3; +25 vs. Fortitude; 4d8 + 7 thunder damage, and the target is deafened and dazed (save ends both).

Shifting Steel (immediate reaction, when a creature adjacent to the steel predator shifts, at-will)
The predator shifts into the space vacated by the triggering creature.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal
Skills Acrobatics +21, Athletics +21, Endurance +23, Stealth +21
Str 22 (+16) **Dex** 23 (+16) **Wis** 23 (+16)
Con 26 (+18) **Int** 15 (+12) **Cha** 12 (+11)

C8: Death Giant Boss

Encounter Level 23 (24,100 XP)

Setup

Bahlik Gur
2 death giant dreadguards
1 steel predator

This is the second encounter that can occur in a previously cleared room or as a wandering monster encounter at a dead end or in any corridor. This encounter features Bahlik Gur, Arantor's second-in-command. Bahlik Gur handles the day-to-day affairs of the upper caverns and assists with Arantor's limited interactions with the rest of the Monadhan domain. Run it only after encounter C7.

When the PCs see the death giants, read:

"Death to the interlopers!" shouts the lead giant as three of the dark-skinned brutes lumber toward you. Next to them is another of the metallic panther creatures you faced when you last fought these giants.

Perception Check

DC 26: *Four flickering, crystalline shards orbit each of the giants at a distance of a few feet.*

Tactics

These monsters use similar tactics to the death giants in C7: mark different PCs and lure the party into separating its force. All four of the monsters can mark: use that to their advantage. The death giant dreadguards and the steel predator behave as they did in encounter C7. Bahlik Gur makes double attacks as often as he can (which doubles his chances of marking a PC) and will use *press the attack* rather than moving himself. He would much rather spend his four shards on *soul shield* than consume a shard for 20 hit points, which is less than 5 percent of his total.

Bahlik Gur is more aware of Monadhan's blessing than most monsters. If either of the dreadguards are almost dead, Bahlik Gur tries to deliver the killing blow himself. If he succeeds in killing the dreadguard, he gains a soul shard and the blessing of Monadhan from a friendly fire incident.

Bahlik Gur (B)	**Level 23 Elite Soldier**
Large shadow humanoid (giant)	XP 10,200
Initiative +18	**Senses** Perception +19; darkvision
Soulcatcher aura 5; a creature that dies within the aura bestows one soul shard to bahlik gur (see *soul shroud*).	
HP 434; **Bloodied** 217	
AC 42; **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 33	
Resist 20 necrotic	
Saving Throws + 2	
Speed 7	
Action Points 1	
Mace (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Reach 2; +29 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is marked.	
Double Attack (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Bahlik Gur makes two mace attacks. If he hits two targets with them, he gains a +2 bonus to his next attack roll.	
Press the Attack (move; at-will)	
Close burst 10; targets 1 ally; the target can take a move action as a free action.	
Battle Fervor	
Bahlik Gur scores critical hits on attack rolls of 19 or 20.	
Death Guardian (immediate interrupt, when an enemy marked by Bahlik Gur makes an attack that does not include Bahlik Gur)	
Bahlik Gur makes a *mace* attack against the enemy.	
Soul Shield (free, when an ally within 5 squares is targeted by an attack)	
Bahlik Gur expends one soul shard and the ally gains a +4 bonus to all defenses against the attack.	
Consume Soul Shard (minor; at-will) ✦ **Healing**	
Bahlik Gur expends one soul shard and regains 20 hit points.	
Soul Shroud	
The soul shroud contains soul shards that swirl around Bahlik Gur to protect and empower it. At the beginning of an encounter, the soul shroud contains four soul shards. While the soul shroud is depleted of soul shards, Bahlik Gur takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Giant
Skills Intimidate + 18	
Str 28 (+20)	**Dex** 20 (+16) **Wis** 16 (+14)
Con 25 (+18)	**Int** 12 (+12) **Cha** 15 (+13)
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, mace, treasure parcels J and K	

2 Death Giant Dreadguards (D) **Level 22 Soldier**
Large shadow humanoid (giant) XP 4,150 each

Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +19; darkvision
Soulcatcher aura 5; a creature that dies within the aura bestows one soul shard to the dreadguard (see *soul shroud*).
HP 209; **Bloodied** 104
AC 38; **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 31
Resist 15 necrotic
Speed 7

Mace (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +29 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage and the target is marked until the end of the dreadguard's next turn.

Death Guardian (immediate interrupt, when an enemy marked by the dreadguard makes an attack that does not include the dreadguard; at-will)
The dreadguard makes a *mace* attack against the triggering enemy.

Soul Shield (free, when an ally within 5 squares is hit by an attack; at-will)
The dreadguard expends one soul shard and the ally gains a +4 bonus to defenses against the attack.

Consume Soul Shard (minor; at-will) ✦ **Healing**
The dreadguard expends one soul shard and regains 20 hit points.

Soul Shroud
The soul shroud contains soul shards that swirl around the dreadguard to protect and empower it. At the beginning of an encounter, the soul shroud contains four soul shards. While the soul shroud is depleted of soul shards, the dreadguard takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Giant
Skills Intimidate + 18
Str 28 (+20) **Dex** 20 (+16) **Wis** 16 (+14)
Con 25 (+18) **Int** 12 (+12) **Cha** 15 (+13)
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, mace

Steel Predator (P) **Level 20 Elite Soldier**
Large immortal animate (living construct) XP 5,600

Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +16; darkvision
HP 388; **Bloodied** 194
AC 36; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 30
Saving Throws +2 (+4 against ongoing damage)
Speed 8
Action Points 1

Bite (Standard, at-will)
Reach 2; +27 vs. AC; 4d6 + 4 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the steel predator's next turn.

Snap Jaw (Standard, at-will)
The steel predator makes a *bite* attack. On a hit, the target is also knocked prone, and the predator makes another *bite* attack against a different target.

Vicious Pounce (Standard, at-will)
The steel predator charges and makes the following attack in place of a *bite* attack; +25 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 5 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone. The predator moves into the space vacated by the target.

Resonating Roar (Standard, recharge ⚄ ⚅ or when the steel predator takes thunder or lightning damage) ✦ **Thunder**
Close burst 3; +25 vs. Fortitude; 4d8 + 7 thunder damage, and the target is deafened and dazed (save ends both).

Shifting Steel (immediate reaction, when a creature adjacent to the steel predator shifts, at-will)
The predator shifts into the space vacated by the triggering creature.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal
Skills Acrobatics +21, Athletics +21, Endurance +23, Stealth +21
Str 22 (+16) **Dex** 23 (+16) **Wis** 23 (+16)
Con 26 (+18) **Int** 15 (+12) **Cha** 12 (+11)

C9: Lower Cavern

Encounter Level 25 (35,000 XP)

Setup

Arantor (A)

This encounter is the climax of the adventure. The PCs must simultaneously manage a skill challenge and a fight with a dual-acting solo dragon, all while Kas waits in the wings.

When the PCs reach the precipice that affords a view of the lower cavern, read:

Below you paces a huge skeletal dragon, shaking its head from side to side and muttering "Oh, no...oh, no..." The dragon is within a chamber more than a hundred feet long, with alcoves and crevices along the periphery. Stalagmites and stone pillars dot the landscape, and gray mist coheres in low spots on the cavern floor.

Along the western wall is a circular portal limned with lightning. You can see shimmering movement within the dark circle, but from this vantage point, you can't make out what lies beyond.

Arcana or Religion Check

DC 26: *The areas of strange mist scattered around the cavern are laden with memories tied to the dark lord, Arantor. Perhaps what is contained within them could prove useful in vanquishing him.*

Dungeoneering Check

DC 23: *The hero notices that the subterranean stream has weakened the rock in the marked squares to the point where a sudden blow might shatter it.*

Tactics

This encounter works best when some players are working on the skill challenge while others are fighting Arantor directly. A dual-acting, 25th-level solo dragon helps to enforce that split. Be ruthless if the PCs all rush headlong into battle and equally ruthless if they spread out and head into the mist. After a few rounds, the battle will settle into a rhythm, and the players will be constantly assessing whether their characters are more useful in the actual battle or in the skill challenge.

Two simple things will help to give the skill challenge its moment in the sun. First, whenever the characters achieve a success, be explicit about the exact penalty that Arantor is suffering because of that success. Such details make the player feel good about the decision to forego combat for a skill check and emphasize the importance of the skill challenge. Second, the success or failure of each skill check is a chance for both you and your players to ham it up a bit and really act like victims/perpetrators of the ancient massacre at Monadhan. Arantor will react with histrionics whenever confronted with evidence of his crime. Watch the interest level around the rest of the table, of course, and don't engage in long soliloquies. Give each skill challenge a bit of dialogue and a dollop of drama, then proceed with the action.

In general, Arantor will fight those PCs who fight him. If a specific PC succeeds twice in a row on the skill challenge, consider sending Arantor after that PC specifically. On an instinctive level, Arantor knows how crippling multiple successes can be, especially if they're easy for the character to accomplish. Sending an adventurer who's been dominated with *influential whispers* after one of his or her allies who's doing well at the skill challenge is another way to counter successful skill checks.

As dragons go, Arantor is more capable making melee attacks than fighting from a distance. He gets to use his breath weapon only twice: once before being bloodied and once at the moment he's bloodied. Make those attacks count. Watch Arantor's hit point total once it drops below 500. He needs to be in perfect position when he becomes bloodied. You will know when that's about to happen, but the players won't.

Imrissa's choices are straightforward but no less potent. *Influential whispers* might be the best attack Arantor/Imrissa has, because dominated is the second-best condition a monster can impose on a PC (second only to the "dead" condition). Keep the dominated figure near one of its allies so the domination can "jump" to another charaacter with the aftereffect. Use *betraying breath* when it can hit three or more figures; it doesn't do much damage, but it eats up the characters' actions twice: first through the dazed condition, and then with an attack that's (probably) aimed at another PC and not at Arantor. The dragon is a powerful tool in robbing players of actions, which are the fundamental currency of the game. Always consider whether more PC actions will be lost with *influential whispers* or with *betraying breath*. And don't forget to teleport—there's nothing wrong with free movement.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The cavern is dimly illuminated by phosphorescent fungus, glimmering insects, and the flickering balefire emanating from Arantor.

Stalagmites and Pillars: The large stalagmites and pillars are blocking terrain, while the areas of smaller stalagmites are difficult terrain and provide cover to those behind them.

Shadowed Crevices: The crevices marked (C) seem to extend farther than they should and rapidly fill with strange mist and shadows. A character that enters one of these crevices must spend one entire turn navigating the oddly shadowed passage before emerging, at the start of their second turn after entering, from a different, randomly determined crevice. A DC 26 Arcana or Dungeoneering check made during the turn spent in transit allows the player to randomly select two crevices as possible emergence points and then choose the one they prefer.

Subterranean River: An underground stream runs just beneath the surface of the cavern in the indicated squares. It flows to the southeast at a rate of 4 squares per turn; move anything in the water 4 squares in the direction of the flow at the start of its turn. A series of stalactites plunge into the river as it exits the cavern; any character not actively attempting to dive below them is automatically stopped from continuing downstream. Crawling out of the stream and onto an adjacent square of rock counts as moving through difficult terrain but is otherwise unimpeded.

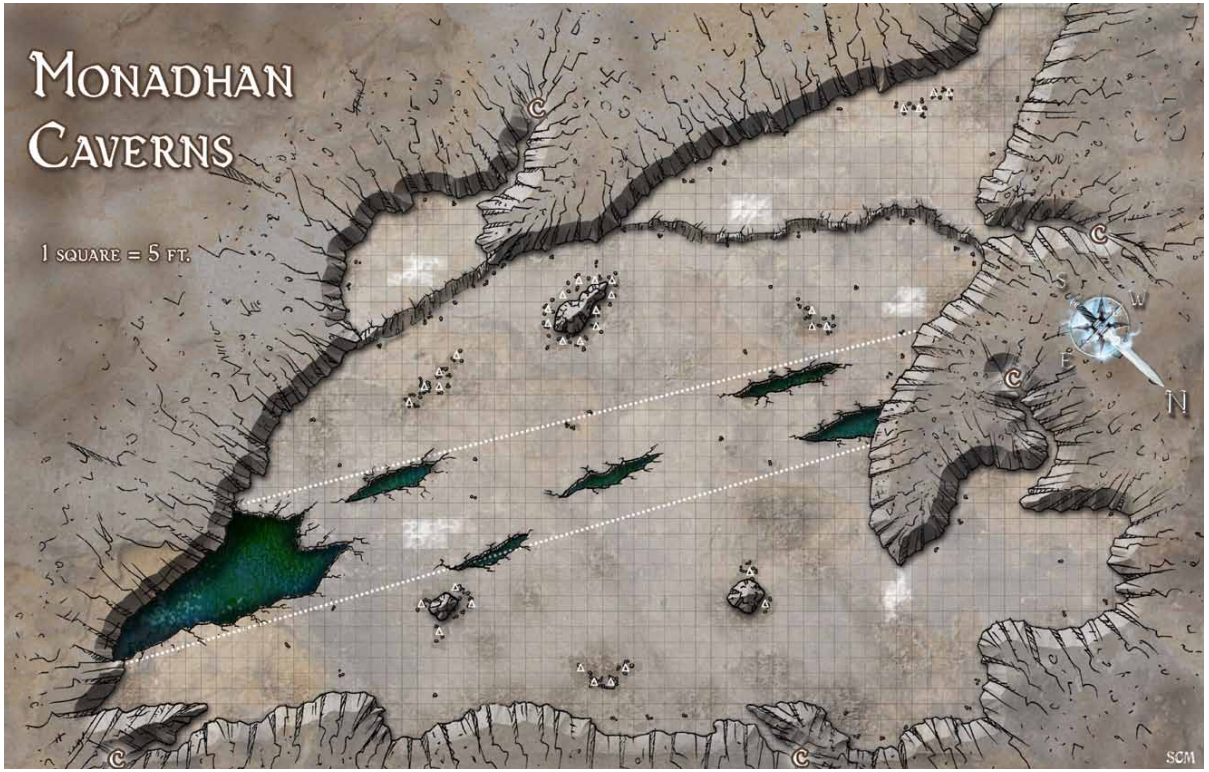
Thin Stone: The stone over the subterranean stream is quite thin, barely capable of sustaining the weight of creatures standing upon it. Any melee or ranged attack can target a square of the thin stone instead of a creature. Bursts and blasts automatically target all the squares in their area, treating them as a single target. The stone has AC and Fortitude defense of 20, with other defenses at 15. An attack that deals more than 15 damage destroys the stone square(s) it targeted. Anyone standing entirely on destroyed squares of flooring drops into the stream automatically. Anyone standing partially on destroyed squares of flooring is allowed a saving throw to avoid falling into the stream.

Mists: Anyone standing in the mist-filled squares can access the skill challenge. See SC1 below.

Ceiling: The ceiling of the cavern is 50 feet above the floor.

Western Wall: Along the western wall is a vertical circle with short forks of lightning emerging from the circumference. This is the portal to the lich's stronghold and "Grasp of the Mantled Citadel." Creatures within 5 squares of the portal can see a shimmering image of the Forest of Twisted Souls in Vaerothim (PCs who saw the tapestry in the Cavern of Statues can make a DC 25 Perception check to make the connection), but the portal doesn't work without the key of betrayal, which is the Sword of Kas.

Southern Alcove: This disused alcove appears to hold no more than rocky debris, but when Imrissa dies, an illusion fades away and Arantor's hoard is revealed. Treasure parcels L, M, N, and O are here, along with the Sword of Kas (described below). When the illusion drops, Kas appears near the cavern



entrance. The characters are closer to the sword and closer to the portal, but Kas certainly has words for his erstwhile partners. Give the players a moment to check out the treasure, then describe Kas's arrival and deal with the adventure's final resolution in the Aftermath section on page 17.

The Weight of Remorse **Level 23**
Skill Challenge XP 0*

Arantor's past is a bloody one, full of carnage and slaughtered innocents. Taking the faces of his victims and calling on his remorse, you seek to distract, disable, or even turn his rage against himself.

The PCs hope to call upon Arantor's conscience and sense of remorse to help them defeat the dark lord and the Imrissa.

Complexity
3 (requires 8 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills
Bluff, Diplomacy, History, Insight.

Bluff (DC 22 standard action)
The PC spins stories about the lives of Arantor's victims, playing up their innocence and the tragedy of their undeserved slaughter.

Diplomacy (DC 22 standard action)
The PC begs and pleads with Arantor for mercy while playing the role of the victim he or she resembles or attempts to call upon Arantor's decency and honor.

History (DC 27 standard action)
The PC recites a litany of the places and peoples ravaged by Arantor in his time, allowing his or her allies to better tailor their stories.
A successful History check also grants a +2 bonus to the next Bluff or Diplomacy check.

Insight (DC 22 standard action)
The PC appeals to Arantor's conscience and feelings of remorse, slowly homing in on the correct path to take.
A successful check also reveals that a failed Intimidate check enrages Arantor. A check result of 27 or higher grants a +2 bonus to the next check in the skill challenge.

Secondary Skills
Arcana or Religion, Intimidate.

Arcana or Religion (DC 14 0 successes, minor action)
The PC uses their extensive knowledge of the flow of magic or the undead to discern the effects each check has had and steer their allies accordingly.
Using these skills doesn't count as a success or failure for the challenge. Instead, the result grants a +2 bonus or -2 penalty to the next character's check.

Intimidate (DC 22 1 success, standard action)
The PC uses their assumed faces to threaten Arantor with divine judgment or to demand to know why they were attacked.
A failed check enrages Arantor, providing him with a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +6 bonus to damage rolls until the end of the PC's next turn.

Special
A character who has discovered Imrissa's name and uses it during this skill challenge gains a +2 bonus to all checks. If Imrissa's spirit is present, all PCs gain a +5 bonus to their checks. These bonuses do not stack.

Success
Arantor guards himself against the influence of the Imrissa and does not act on Imrissa's turn until he uses *shattered prison*. Each success has additional consequences as follows:
1st Success: The character deals 4d10 psychic damage to Arantor.
2nd: Arantor takes a -1 penalty to attack rolls and all defenses until the end of the encounter.

Arantor (A) **Level 25 Solo Brute**
Huge natural magical beast (dragon, undead) XP 35,000

Initiative +19; see also *two souls* **Senses** Perception +19; darkvision
HP 819; **Bloodied** 409; see also *bloodied breath and shattered prison*
AC 38; **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 36
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 25 cold, 15 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 15 radiant
Saving Throws +5
Speed 8, fly 8 (hover)
Action Points 2

Bite (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Reach 2; +30 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage plus 2d8 necrotic damage.

Claw (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +30 vs. AC; 2d8 + 8 damage.

Furious Onslaught (standard; must be Arantor's turn; at-will)
Arantor makes a claw attack against each enemy in reach, and one bite attack.

Remnant Breath (standard; must be Arantor's turn; encounter) ✦ **Cold, Necrotic**
Close blast 5; +28 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 5 necrotic damage, and the target takes 15 ongoing cold damage (save ends).

Bloodied Breath (when Arantor first becomes bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Cold, Necrotic**
Arantor recharges *remnant breath* and uses it immediately.

Betraying Breath (standard action; must be Imrissa's turn; recharge ⚅ ⚅) ✦ **Charm, Psychic**
Close blast 5; targets enemies; +28 vs. Will; 2d10 + 4 psychic damage and the target is dazed until it damages one of its allies.

Influential Whispers (standard; must be Imrissa's turn; at-will) ✦ **Charm, Psychic**
Ranged 10; +28 vs. Will; 2d10 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is dominated (save ends). *Aftereffect:* The nearest ally within 3 squares of the target is dominated (save ends). This attack does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Dead Dragon's Stride (move; must be Imrissa's turn; at-will) ✦ **Teleportation**
Arantor teleports 10 squares.

Two Souls
Arantor acts twice each round, once on initiative result 30 and once on initiative result 20. The first is Arantor's turn, and the second is Imrissa's turn, which determines which powers Arantor can use on each turn. On Imrissa's turn, Arantor can only move by using *dead dragon's stride*.

Shattered Prison (when Arantor drops to 0 or fewer hit points)
Arantor's corpse cracks open and releases Imrissa, who continues to fight. She is large instead of huge, has 234 hit points, does not benefit from *two souls*, can move normally, and only uses powers that can be used on Imrissa's turn.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Draconic
Skills Athletics +27, Insight +19
Str 31 (+22) **Dex** 25 (+19) **Wis** 14 (+14)
Con 26 (+20) **Int** 14 (+14) **Cha** 23 (+18)

3rd: The character deals 4d10 psychic damage to Arantor.
4th: Arantor takes a -1 penalty to attack rolls and all defenses until the end of the encounter, and *betraying breath* recharges only on a 6 until Arantor uses *shattered prison*.
5th: The character deals 4d10 psychic damage to Arantor.
6th: Arantor takes a -1 penalty to attack rolls and all defenses until the end of the encounter.
7th: The character deals 4d10 psychic damage to Arantor.
8th: Arantor takes a -1 penalty to attack rolls and all defenses until the end of the encounter, and Arantor does not act on Imrissa's turn until he uses *shattered prison*.

Failure

Imrissa retains some of its hold on Arantor despite the appeals to his conscience. The effects already accrued remain, but the skill challenge can no longer be accessed during this encounter.

***Note** that PCs receive no experience for completing the skill challenge; they receive the relevant experience by defeating Arantor (which is now easier).

Sword of Kas* — Epic Level

The Sword of Kas was created by Vecna for his lieutenant. Kas rewarded his former master by using it to cut off Vecna's hand and gouge out his eye. The Sword offers great power to any who grasp it, but wielders end up betraying what they love most.

The Sword of Kas is a +5 vicious short sword with the following properties and powers.

Weapon: short sword
Enhancement: +5 attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +5d12 damage.
Property: The Sword of Kas deals 2d10 extra damage against allies and former allies.
Property: Whenever an attack with the Sword of Kas reduces a target to 0 hit points or fewer, you gain concealment until the end of your next turn.
Property: If you attack Vecna, a servant of Vecna, a cultist of Vecna, or any other creature working directly to serve Vecna's ends, you deal 5 extra damage on a hit.
Property: When you take the total defense action or use your second wind, you gain a +5 item bonus to all defenses until the start of your next turn.
Property: The Sword of Kas is initially invisible to everyone but the creature possessing it. You gain combat advantage against melee targets when using it until you successfully hit, at which point the weapon becomes visible to everyone. The Sword of Kas turns invisible again after being sheathed for a short rest (or for 5 minutes).
Power (Encounter): Free Action. When you would pull or push a target, you slide the target the same distance instead.
Power (Daily • Poison, Radiant): Free Action. When you hit with the Sword of Kas, the target takes ongoing 15 poison damage (save ends). If the attack is made against an undead creature, it instead takes ongoing 15 radiant damage (save ends). Saving throws made to end this effect take a -2 penalty.

*The Sword of Kas is fully described in *Open Grave*, page 44.

Kas of Monadhan — Level 26 Solo Soldier

Medium natural humanoid (undead) — XP 45,000

Initiative +20 **Senses** Perception +22; darkvision
HP 952; **Bloodied** 476
Regeneration 20 (regeneration doesn't function while Kas is exposed to direct sunlight)
AC 40; **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 41
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 15 fire, 15 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant
Saving Throws +5
Speed 7, climb 3 (spider climb)
Action Points 2

⊕ **Bastard Sword** (Standard, at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+31 vs. AC; 2d10 + 10 damage.

Blood Drain (standard; requires combat advantage against the target; encounter) ✦ **Healing**
+29 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 14 damage, and the target is weakened (save ends), and Kas regains 59 hit points.

Betrayer's Whirlwind (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Targets up to three creatures; +31 vs. AC; 2d10 + 10 damage, and Kas slides the target 3 squares.

Dominating Gaze (minor, recharge 4 5 6) ✦ **Charm, Gaze**
Ranged 5; +29 vs. Will; the target is dominated (save ends). *Aftereffect:* The target is dazed (save ends).

Kas's Challenge (Minor 1/round; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Close burst 5; targets one enemy; no attack roll; the target is marked until the end of Kas's next turn. If the target makes an attack that doesn't include Kas as a target while marked by this power, it takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends).

Kas's Recovery (when Kas becomes bloodied)
All adverse effects affecting Kas end, then Kas takes a standard action after the triggering action is resolved.

Mist Form (standard; encounter) ✦ **Polymorph**
Kas becomes insubstantial and gains fly (hover) 12 until the end of his next turn. Kas cannot attack while in this form and can sustain this form for up to 1 hour.

Misty Assault (immediate reaction, when hit by an attack; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
Kas flies 6 squares and is insubstantial while he flies. He can make a *bastard sword* attack before or after he flies.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Arcana +25, Insight +22, Intimidate +27, Religion +25, Stealth +21

Str 26 (+21)	**Dex** 20 (+18)	**Wis** 19 (+17)
Con 22 (+19)	**Int** 24 (+20)	**Cha** 28 (+22)

Equipment plate armor, bastard sword

About the Author

David Noonan has an extensive list of RPG credits, including *Martial Power*™, *Scepter Tower of Spellgard*™, and contributions to the 4th Edition core rules. He lives in Washington state with his wife and two children.

NEW MONSTERS

Cambion Impaler	**Level 19 Skirmisher**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)	XP 2,400

Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +24; darkvision
HP 179; **Bloodied** 89
AC 33; **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 30
Resist 10 fire
Speed 6, fly 10 (clumsy)

Spear (Standard, at-will) ✦ Weapon
+24 vs. AC; 3d6+8 damage.

Swooping Charge (Standard, encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
The cambion impaler charges and makes the following attack in place of a melee basic attack: +25 vs. AC; 3d6 + 8 damage, and either slide the target 3 squares and immobilize the target until the end of the impaler's next turn or deal 10 ongoing damage. The impaler is not considered a clumsy flyer when making this attack.

Soulscorch (Standard, recharge ⚄) ✦ **Fire**
Area burst 1 within 10; +20 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 4 fire damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Athletics +20, Bluff +19, Diplomacy +19
Str 22 (+15) **Dex** 25 (+16) **Wis** 20 (+14
Con 19 (+13) **Int** 17 (+12) **Cha** 21 (+14)
Equipment robes, spear

Cambion Legionnaire	**Level 21 Soldier**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)	XP 3,200

Initiative +18 **Senses** Perception +20; darkvision
HP 198; **Bloodied** 99
AC 37; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 31 (35 if another cambion is within 3 squares)
Resist 15 fire
Speed 6, fly 8 (clumsy)

Gladius (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+28 vs. AC; 3d6 + 8 damage. Effect: The target is marked until the end of the legionnaire's next turn.

Shield Bash (minor; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+28 vs. AC; the cambion legionnaire pushes the target 1 square and can shift into the square the target vacates.

Immolate (standard; recharge ⚄) ✦ **Fire**
Close burst 2; +28 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 5 fire damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage.

Legion's Mantle
While the legionnaire is within 3 squares of another cambion, it gains a +4 bonus to Will defense (already included in its statistics) and a +2 bonus on saving throws.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Arcana +22, Bluff +24, Diplomacy +24
Str 14 (+13) **Dex** 20 (+16) **Wis** 19 (+15)
Con 22 (+17) **Int** 22 (+17) **Cha** 27 (+19)
Equipment short sword, light shield

Cambion Soulthief **Level 22 Lurker**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 4,150

Initiative +22 **Senses** Perception +18; darkvision
HP 156; **Bloodied** 78
AC 36; **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 30
Resist 15 fire
Speed 10, Fly 8 (clumsy)

Longsword (standard, at-will) ✦ Weapon
+27 vs. AC; 2d6 + 8 damage.

Soul Grasp (standard; recharges when no enemy is affected by this power) ✦ **Necrotic**
Ranged 10; +27 vs. Will; 1d10 + 8 necrotic damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage and is slowed (save ends both). *First Failed Save:* The target is immobilized instead of slowed (save ends). *Second Failed Save:* The target is stunned instead of immobilized (save ends).

Double Lunge (standard; must be invisible; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
The cambion soulthief makes a *longsword* attack against two targets.

Combat Advantage
The cambion soulthief deals 1d6 extra damage on melee attacks against any target granting combat advantage to it.

Invisibility (standard, at-will) ✦ **Illusion**
The cambion soulthief becomes invisible until it attacks.

Soul Fuel (minor; a creature must be immobilized or stunned by this soulthief's *soul grasp*; at-will)
The cambion soulthief turns invisible until it attacks and teleports 10. The creature affected by soul grasp loses a healing surge and automatically saves against the effect of *soul grasp*.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal
Skills Stealth +23
Str 23 (+17) **Dex** 25 (+18) **Wis** 14 (+13)
Con 18 (+15) **Int** 13 (+12) **Cha** 17 (+14)
Equipment longsword, iron gauntlet

Disfigured Vampire **Level 21 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 3,200

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +16; darkvision
HP 245; **Bloodied** 122
Regeneration 10 (regeneration does not function while the disfigured vampire is exposed to direct sunlight)
AC 33; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 31
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 15 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 15 radiant
Speed 6

Vampiric Claw (Standard, at-will) ✦ Necrotic
+24 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage, and 10 ongoing necrotic damage (save ends).

Gaze Upon My Hideous Ruin (immediate reaction, when first bloodied and again when reduced to 0 hit points; at-will) ✦ **Fear, Psychic**
Close burst 2; +22 vs. Will; 2d8 + 7 psychic damage, and the disfigured vampire pushes the target 5 squares.

Blood Drain (Standard; requires combat advantage; recharges when an adjacent creature becomes bloodied) ✦ **Healing**
+23 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 13 damage, and the target is weakened (save ends), and the disfigured vampire regains 61 hit points.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Str 23 (+16) **Dex** 15 (+12) **Wis** 13 (+11)
Con 25 (+17) **Int** 7 (+8) **Cha** 17 (+13)

Callophage Vampire **Level 22 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 4,150

Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +19; darkvision
HP 203; **Bloodied** 101
Regeneration 10 (regeneration does not function while the callophage vampire is exposed to direct sunlight)
AC 36; **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 35
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 15 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 10 radiant
Speed 6

Claw (Standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+28 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is grabbed.

Blood Drain (Standard; must have combat advantage; recharges when an adjacent creature becomes bloodied) ✦ **Healing**
+24 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 15 damage, and the target is weakened (save ends), and the callophage vampire regains 50 hit points.

Disfiguring Bite (Standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Targets a creature grabbed by the callophage vampire; +26 vs.Fortitude; 3d8 + 5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 psychic damage and is dazed (save ends both).

Stolen Beauty (Standard; cannot be used until a disfiguring bite hits; recharges after each successful *disfiguring bite*) ✦ **Charm, Psychic**
Ranged 10; +26 vs. Will; 3d10 + 3 psychic damage, and the target cannot use encounter attack powers, daily attack powers, or utility powers (save ends). *Aftereffect:* The target cannot willingly move closer to the callophage vampire (save ends).

Alluring Visage (standard; recharges when bloodied) ✦ **Charm**
Close burst 10; +26 vs.Will; the target is pulled 3 squares and immobilized (save ends). *Sustain Minor:* Each creature that has not yet saved against the effect is pulled 3 squares and immobilized (save ends).

Mist Form (standard; encounter) ✦ **Polymorph**
The callophage vampire becomes insubstantial and gains a fly speed of 12, but cannot make attacks. The callophage vampire can remain in mist form for up to 1 hour or end the effect as a minor action.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Diplomacy +21, Streetwise +21
Str 18 (+15) **Dex** 20 (+16) **Wis** 17 (+14)
Con 19 (+15) **Int** 20 (+16) **Cha** 21 (+16)

EBERRON™

Explore Fairhaven

by Chris Sims
illustration by Adam Paquette - Empty Room Studio
cartography by Sean Macdonald

"Crown jewel and crown seat of Aundair. Envy of Galifar, far and wide. Fairhaven, city of white spires and crystal waters, your name rings as modest to all who behold you."

Aundair is a land of rolling plains and forests. Its people are earthy, idealistic, patriotic, and hungry for knowledge. Respect for arcane magic runs deep in them, and their nation produces some of the finest arcanists on the continent. In the intellectual and spiritual center of this diversity stands Fairhaven, capital of Aundair.

FAIRHAVEN

Its ancient foundations set on a riverside, Fairhaven is the cultural and symbolic heart of Aundair.

Population: 90,000; 20,000 in the nearby countryside. Humans are populous within the city, followed in order of population by half-elves, gnomes, and elves. Other races are far less numerous.

Government: Prince Aurad ir'Wynarn is the city's governor. Nobles and other influential individuals who have interests within or near the city advise the governor when called to do so. A network of bureaucrats, some of them landless nobles, helps run the city.

Defense: Fairhaven maintains an extensive constabulary called the Fairhaven Watch, and it includes arcanists trained in Aundair and ex-soldiers. The Knights Arcane maintains its garrison within Fairhold, with divisions including the royal Arcane Guard, Fairhaven Wands, Knights Phantom, and Sky Knights (dragonhawk riders). Royal and noble armies have similar holds within or near the city. Also within Fairhold is the Tower of the Eyes (*Eberron® Campaign Guide*, page 71) where the queen's intelligence agents work and train. Capable students from numerous arcane schools and brave citizens willing to take up arms supplement these considerable defenses.

Inns: Fairview Inn (Fairhold), University Place (Knowledge Ward), Ghallanda House (Chalice Center), Hooked Inn (Whiteroof), Wayfinder's Rest (Sunset Ward), Red Maple (Wood Ward), Saint's Hall (Sovereign Ward).

Taverns: Royal Vintners (Fairhold), Ghallanda House Restaurant (Chalice Center), The Tipsy Nixie (Whiteroof), University Place Alehouse (Knowledge Ward), Wayfinder's Brewery and Spirits (Sunset Ward), Red Maple (Wood Ward), Row's End Tavern (Wood Ward), The Ribald Rector (Knowledge Ward).

Supplies: Distant Exchange (Wood Ward), Dragonhawk Reagents (Knowledge Ward), Fairhaven Consortium (Chalice Center), Haldran Books (Sovereign Ward), Riverside Supply (Whiteroof), Wayfinder Foundation Surplus (Sunset Ward).

Temples: Hall of the Assembled Host (Sovereign Host; Sovereign Ward), Shrine of the Giver (Traveler; Chalice Center), Dome of Light (Path of Light; Knowledge Ward).

LORE

Common Knowledge: Fairhaven has an orderly design, with brick- or stone-paved streets and stunning towers and minarets. Its grand style hints of something other than human thought, and its layout suggests careful planning. None can miss the pale towers of the city's central fortress and royal palace, Fairhold (*Eberron Campaign Guide*, page 69). Elsewhere about the city, other buildings, particularly municipal ones, echo the style of these spires. Magic as much as muscle shaped numerous buildings.

From the uplands about 50 miles southwest of the city spills the Aundair River. The river is wide, slow, and deep by the time it reaches Fairhaven, and then it meanders northeasterly down the plains toward Scion's Sound. Its position on the river makes Fairhaven a trade gateway to western Khorvaire. Other cities in the region are less hospitable, and the river becomes too shallow and treacherous for larger merchant vessels to fare beyond the city. As a mercantile hub, Fairhaven is also a place full of opportunities, legal and otherwise.

Fairhaven offers much more than moneymaking prospects, however. It is a focus of adventure, learning, and magic. Fey are common here, harkening to the time when Aundair was a wilder place. The University of Wynarn (*Eberron Campaign Guide*, page 69) also brings a diverse population into the city from across Khorvaire. Major holds of several dragonmarked houses stand in or near the city, including Cannith West. The Wayfinder Foundation has its headquarters within the city, bringing in all sorts of venturesome folk.

History DC 15: After a spy loyal to the Church of the Silver Flame divulged Aundairian battle plans, Aundair lost Thaliost in 926 YK. Aundair's citizens responded with a passion, sacking Silver Flame temples and killing priests. In Fairhaven, citizens looted the Silver Flame Cathedral and lynched any clergy who failed to renounce the Flame. The ruler of Aundair at the time, Regent Marlex, declared the religion anathema to the Crown. By the regent's order, the Silver Flame Cathedral of Fairhaven was closed but left standing as a reminder to Aundairians of what they had lost to Thrane. As the Last War ground on, Marlex's edict became tradition. The abandoned and crumbling cathedral still stands today. Fairhaveners avoid it and its long shadow.

History DC 20: To those knowledgeable on city building, Fairhaven has the appearance of a young city. Old cities meander beyond their original layout, becoming chaotic. Fairhaven has the geometric layout of a settlement that has yet to escape its reins.

Fairhaven started as a military installation and became a trade port. The military leaders at the time planned it from the beginning and controlled its growth. Later, when the needs of the city called for new construction, such as the recent addition of Fairhaven's three airship towers, those with a voice in the city made a way clear to build the necessary structures.

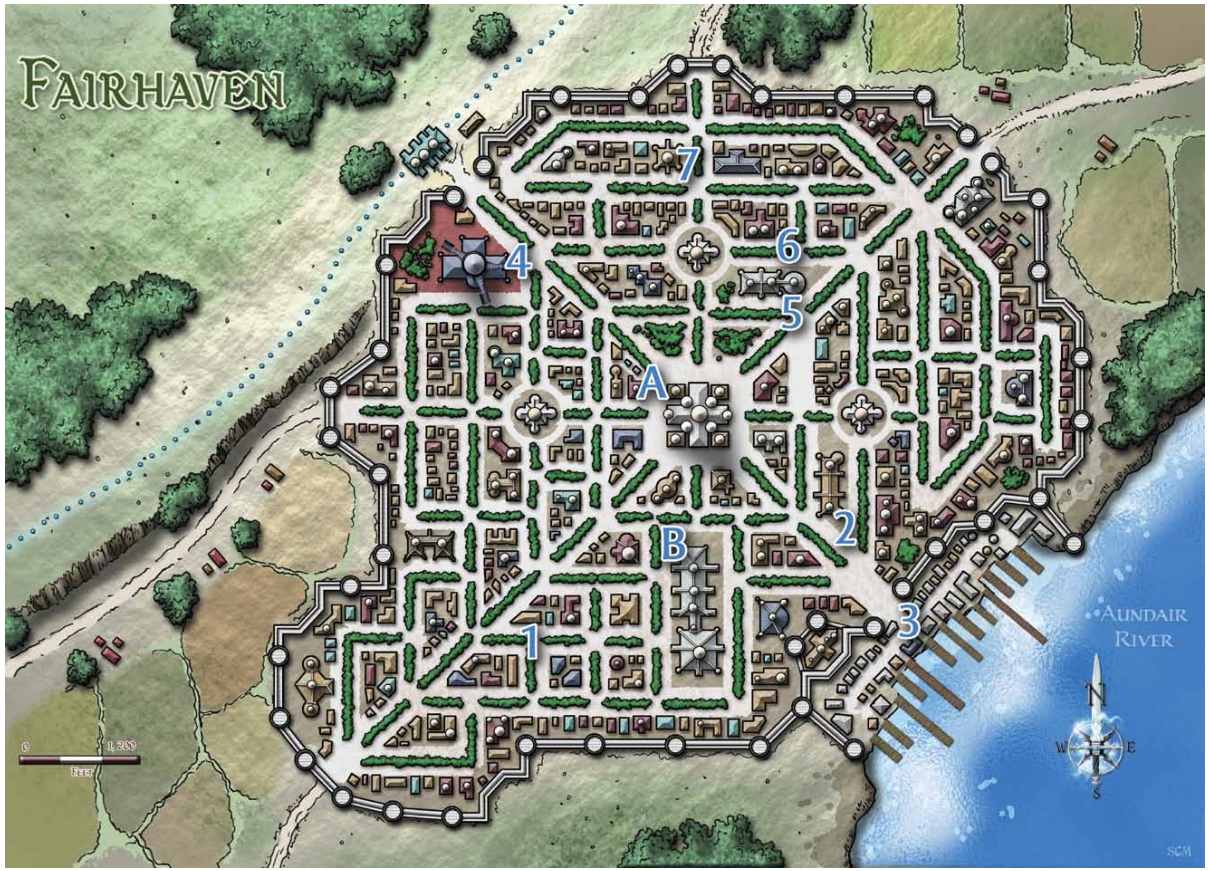
Fairhaven has also had its share of river floods in its history. Civic magewrights and their magic keep the city dry now, even when the Aundair River rises to flood fields near the city. In the past, however, the waters washed away the old and made way for the new.

History DC 25: When the majority of Tairnadal elves abandoned their colonies to goblins thousands of years ago, a few clans of elves remained in Khorvaire. As mobile as their counterparts in Aerenal,

some of these elves migrated north to put distance between them and the power centers of the Dhakaani goblins. Over time, their nomadic ways took them amazing distances and their culture changed. Sarlonan immigrants met these elves in Khorvaire and absorbed them, which led to the half-elves of modern Khorvaire.

Among these elves were those who plied the waters around Scion's Sound and the Aundair River when humans and other half-elves came and established Thaliost, Aundair's earliest city. Fairhaven served as one of the harbors of the "river elves" in those days. Numerous half-elves of Fairhaven and western Scion's Sound still bear the traditions and fiery spirit of these elf ancestors.

The river elves are still fine riders. Many believe that the horses of Aundair might have descended from those the migrant Tairnadal elves brought with them. Some claim that the elves also influenced the dueling and singing traditions of Aundair.



A *- Farhold (Eberron Campaign Guide, page 69)*
B *- University of Wynarn (Eberron Campaign Guide, page 69)*

Characters

The following characters play a large role in Fairhaven.

Queen Aurala ir'Wynarn

An imposing woman with diplomatic skill unmatched among her peers, the Queen of Aundair is agile with the intricacies of ruling her land. She bends just enough to keep her vassals loyal while keeping a firm grasp on royal power. With public edicts and private discourse, she supports the ambitions of others enough to keep them content and, perhaps, lead them into underestimating her. When she makes mistakes, such as her mishandling of Cyran refugees, she does her best to turn the tide back in her favor. Aurala advocates for peace, but such ideals are secondary to her ambition to rule all Khorvaire with the crown of Galifar on her head.

Queen's Gambit: Aurala is a masterful politician, and she is no warrior. She relies on the Royal Eyes and other agents to help her with the dirty and bloody work of maintaining Aundair. To keep tabs on her warlords and to circumvent any possible leak from within official channels, she uses independent operatives. An autonomous team might serve the queen and her loyalists in all sorts of ways, including against other nations. Thrane suffers Aurala's secret opposition at every turn, but Aurala encourages any action likely to weaken others among the Five Nations.

Prince Adal ir'Wynarn, First Warlord

Aurala's younger brother Adal is the Royal Minister of Magic, First Warlord of Aundair, and an arcanist of considerable might. He is also ambitious. He maintains his home within Arcanix, where he oversees the

Fairhaven in Your Campaign

Fairhaven is the center of Aundair, and, due to many of the topics covered by this article, it fits well with any D&D setting that cleaves close to the game's core conceits. If you need a river or coastal city, Fairhaven can serve you well. Alternatively, you can use the map as a plan for an adventure site.

If you wish to do so, removing the Eberron elements is simple. Queen Aurala's ambitions can be to unite other states with hers with as little bloodshed as possible. Her advisors can have aims similar to what they have now. The lightning rail station can disappear, and the airship towers can become centers for the Knights Arcane or other military interests. You can rename the dragonmarked house facilities to suit your campaign, using the general information and hooks as you wish. Perhaps Cannith West is an independent arcane school and arcanist guild, and the House Jorasco citadel is the center for an order of healers. Other factions and NPCs can fall in line with your campaign. For instance, the Adarans can become Shou in a Forgotten Realms® conversion.

Forgotten Realms Fairhaven

Since the Forgotten Realms setting focuses on medieval fantasy, Fairhaven can work as suggested above. It could be Crimmor in Amn, or central Baldur's Gate within the old walls. It could be Suzail of Cormyr, with King Foril and his court replacing Aurala and hers. Darromar of Tethyr is another royal city for which Fairhaven could serve. Scornubel in Elturgard is a possibility, as is Gheldaneth of High Imaskar. Fairhaven also makes a good analog for Everlund of Laruar, which is a river city centered on the Bell Market that has five gates and spokelike streets. It could instead be Silverymoon, a magical and cultural center in the same region. As an adventure site, Fairhaven could be Wheloon, Old Valaen, or another ruined city such as those in Dambrath. The contents of this article can then guide you in creating encounters and locales in the city.

Arcane Congress and Ministry of Magic. He returns to Fairhaven at regular intervals to speak with his sister and to oversee magical matters important to the military. Although he is discontent with allowing Lord Darro too much influence in either area, he sees Darro as a capable but misguided warmonger rather than a rival. Adal believes unhappy chance placed the crown on Aurala's brow, and that he should have it and, eventually, the crown of Galifar. Through a great arcane attack, he plans to retake Thaliost from Thrane to gain popular support and cow other nations into submission. If Aurala and her troublesome heirs disappear during the upheaval, all the better.

Arcane Plots: Adal's agents keep watch for any arcane item, power, or ritual that might advance Adal's ambitions. He keeps strong ties to the Wayfinder Foundation for this purpose. Through go-betweens, he hires agents to test his theories and to operate against Thrane—especially in and around Thaliost. Adal also has double agents who work for him and his sister.

Prince Aurad ir'Wynarn, High Chancellor

Unlike Adal, Prince Aurad, the queen's youngest brother, devotes himself to the crown. Like Aurala, Aurad is a politician rather than a warrior. He serves as Aurala's chief advisor, leader of her diplomatic corps, and governor of Fairhaven. Aurad's morals place him above intrigue and outside the grasp of corruption. The queen can rely upon him to render advice that holds at its foundation the best interests of Aundair and its ruler. Aurad prefers peace, however, and this colors his counsel. He counts himself and Aundair lucky that his sister believes that the crown of Galifar must be acquired through strategies better than outright warfare.

Fair Governance: When it comes to taking care of the city's problems, the queen can overrule Prince Aurad's decisions, but she seldom involves herself in such matters. Player characters who help Fairhaven maintain its peace and prosperity can count on great rewards from Aurad's even hand. Conspirators, criminals, and cultists abound in Aundair's capital, and PCs can come to Aurad's attention by opposing such illicit activity or by being caught participating in it.

Lord Darro ir'Lien, Second Warlord

Lord Darro is a bold warrior who has augmented his martial skill with considerable arcane power. He leads Aundair's Knights Arcane and is captain among the order's elite Knights Phantom, dragoons who ride steeds conjured with the Phantom Steed ritual. Darro's ambition to retake a section of the Eldeen

Reaches is well known, and he intends to reclaim Aundairian territory and harden the nation's troops for the inevitable resurgence of war. He splits his time in Fairhaven between currying the queen's favor and that of Prince Adal.

Eyes in the Woodlands: Through sympathetic intermediaries, Lord Darro hires willing mercenaries and patriots to enter the Eldeen Reaches. Those who take these missions might spy on fortifications and military targets, disrupt trade, foment dissent, destroy key resources, or even assassinate leaders. Lord Darro maintains deniability, taking only the most successful agents into his inner circle.

Royal Family

Prince Consort Sasik d'Vadalis, whom the queen's supporters claim she married for love, lives in Fairhold with the queen and two of her children. One of these children is Crown Prince Wrogar, who is a proper young man and stands to inherit the throne. The other is Princess Corrine, a rebellious teenager who abuses her authority upon occasion. Sasik keeps a low profile so that no one can use his actions against the queen.

Prince Jurian, Aurala and Sasik's middle child, has a libertine reputation. He is currently living abroad in self-imposed exile for breaking his mother's decree against honor dueling. In truth, the prince is a top agent for the Royal Eyes, and he shares Aurala's penchant for encouraging others' misjudgment and underestimation.

Prince Aurad also lives in Fairhold with his wife, Wrenya, and five children. Adal has no spouse and no legitimate children, although he has had numerous paramours.

Castellan Adele Fulirno

Those who seek an audience with the queen or any important royal advisors must first meet with Castellan Fulirno. The castellan once acted as an agent for the Royal Eyes of Aundair, but she tired of leaving the country she loved behind. A serious and polite woman, Fulirno knows the queen well and knows when to send matters before Aurala or others in the court.

Political Nexus: Castellan Fulirno is loyal to Queen Aurala, but she plays a duplicitous game. Each warlord believes her to be an ally, and she pretends to have a secret, stormy, on-and-off relationship with each. In truth, she and Aurad work to keep the warlords off balance. Through numerous avenues that include the castellan, PCs might become double or triple agents loyal to the queen. The castellan might instead employ the characters to help keep up appearances to the warlords. If Fulirno can be counted on for any one thing, it is that Aurala and Aurad know everything the castellan learns.

Ubeth Gratios

A wealthy human wine merchant and known rake, Ubeth specializes in exotic drinks from southern lands, including Aerenal and Xen'drik. He's also not all he seems. Ubeth is Jabreki Osluuhn, an elf master of disguise and operative for the Order of Vigilant Sentinels—elite agents of the Sibling Kings of his homeland. Although he frequents the Aereni Embassy in Fairhaven, ostensibly to secure his shipments, he is independent and answers to no one there.

Elven Interests: Other than his Aerenal connections, Ubeth has contacts among the river elves, in the Wayfinder Foundation, among Fairhaven's criminals, and within the University of Wynarn. He has seen signs that the Blood of Vol has an established cult in Fairhaven. Whisper Rock has piqued his interest, although he suspects the site hides great evil. As a Wayfinder sponsor and investor, he pays close attention to events that involve Aerenal, Valenar, Xen'drik, drow, or giants. He's a likely patron or companion for those who support Aereni interests, but he's an enemy to any who oppose the same.

Factions

Player characters might have to deal with one or more of the following factions while in Fairhaven.

1 - Adaran Enclave

Kalashtar make up a tiny minority in Fairhaven, and most of them live in the Adaran enclave in the city's Knowledge Ward. Within the enclave, the Adarans share their traditions and offer whatever help they can to their fellow citizens. Citizens in the city consider the kalashtar and other Adarans to be valued neighbors. The Dome of Light, a shrine to the Path of Light, offers facilities for meditation, psionic training, and even magical healing. Adarans, kalashtar and otherwise, also go to the university as teachers and students. Partially because of this population, Fairhaven is an Aundairian center for martial arts.

Fair Inspiration: Wherever the kalashtar gather, the Dreaming Dark can be expected to have eyes. Fairhaven is no different. New to the court of Fairhold are Riedran Ambassador Sharaktavi, an Inspired diplomat, and her entourage. With them, inside the Riedran embassy, the Dreaming Dark has gained a foothold in Aundair. Sharaktavi has stirred darker dreams in Queen Aurala by suggesting that Aundair

might have allies in Riedra if war erupts anew among the Five Nations.

The Riedrans have yet to work directly against the kalashtar, since little would be gained. Prince Aurad has heard the basics of both sides of the Sarlonan conflict—the Adarans are criminals and terrorists, and the Riedrans are oppressive autocrats. Given the reputation of the kalashtar in Fairhaven and the queen's favor for the Riedran ambassador, the governor has no wish to take sides in such foreign concerns.

Cannith West

Jorlanna d'Cannith (*Eberron Campaign Guide*, page 211) is considered a citizen of Fairhaven although the main Cannith compound stands outside Fairhaven's sturdy walls (*Eberron Campaign Guide*, page 210). Members of this Cannith branch receive training in social skills, and as a result of their diplomatic abilities, the house has a good reputation in Fairhaven, Aundair, and the Eldeen Reaches. Much to Zorlan d'Cannith's vexation, Jorlanna and her branch have a better relationship to the Twelve in Korth than Cannith East does.

Amorous Tinkering: Jorlanna's colorful indiscretions are far from over. She has many friends in other houses, which is a fact her enemies would like to change. They could do so if they found out about her romance with a young scion of House Orien, Kkressd d'Orien. Whether Kkressd's feelings are true or he is manipulating the matriarch remains to be seen. He might be more than he seems.

Cult of Life

A widespread sect of the Blood of Vol, the Cult of Life operates in secret within Fairhaven. Its members are skilled and ruthless individuals who work to take positions of power, whether mercantile, religious, or political. Seekers who serve the Cult of Life sometimes meet to practice the rites of their religion and trade secrets. Only the most powerful Seekers know the truth at the center of their religion, and many of them possess dark powers that allow them to steal life energy or kill from the shadows.

Blood Web: Torven "the Ageless" d'Medani is a half-elf vampire lord, the leader of the Cult of Life in Fairhaven, and one of the cult's principles in Khorvaire. Although House Medani's authorities believe he is dead, he maintains power and influence over a few choice house scions in the Fairhaven enclave and elsewhere. He also has a network of sinister connections among influential persons in Fairhaven, Arcanix, and wider Aundair, Karrnath, and Thrane. The PCs might follow any of these strands to the Cult of Life and, possibly, to Torven's lair. He has established his lair in ancient catacombs under the Sovereign Ward.

2 - Dark Dagger Gang

Strongest among the criminal gangs of Fairhaven, the Dark Dagger Gang operates out of the abandoned Silver Flame cathedral on the southern side of the Sovereign Ward within eyeshot of the university. Kreelo, a changeling who is the most wanted person in Fairhaven if not Aundair, leads this band of smugglers, extortionists, and cutthroats.

Numerous Knives: The Dark Dagger Gang has its filthy fingers in all sorts of black-market trade, which can involve any PC interested in trading in illegal goods. Characters might run into Dark Dagger members shaking down merchants, running a kidnapping outfit, or any other sort of illicit activity. Without drawing attention to the place itself, the gang members perpetuate the urban legend that the cathedral is haunted and looted. This could backfire if any hero types take the danger seriously and decide to investigate or remove the threat.

3 - River Elves

Half-elves common in the Whiteroof Ward add local color to Fairhaven and points east into Scion's Sound. Dressed flamboyantly in loose clothing reminiscent of Valenar elf dress, these quixotic, itinerant people are fishers, ferry folk, shippers, and even pirates on the Aundair River. Such "river elves," as they are called, are rumored to descend from Fairhaven's earliest inhabitants, and they keep contact among diverse clans up and down the waterways around the sound. River elves are vibrant and independent, and they are savvy and bold in business and other interpersonal dealings. The half-elves also look to the protection of their kind, and they have a reputation for duping the unwary.

River Running: No better guide than a river elf can be had for the environs of the Aundair River all the way to Scion's Sound. Anyone who needs to move something in or out of Fairhaven without the notice of the authorities can turn to the river elves. Some Aundairians consider the half-elves, who have downriver dealings in Thrane and Karrnath, a little too liberal and worldly. This tolerance works two ways. PCs might run afoul of river elf buccaneers or thwart smugglers in Thrane's employ, but they might as easily work with the half-elves to root out river monsters or gather intelligence in Thaliost or Korth.

Plots

Where people live and work, some seek goals that come at the expense of others. Fairhaven is no exception.

Greenkeepers

The Greenkeeper Guild maintains a stable of gardeners and animal handlers who keep the city's numerous parks and street beds clean, healthy, and safe. In doing so, they also help maintain Fairhaven's status as one of the most beautiful and tidy cities in all Khorvaire. House Vadalis sanctions the guild, some of whose members use primal magic. Prominent members work on the grounds in Fairhold, although the queen's personal retainers handle similar duties within the fortress.

Roots of Ash: The Ashbound have infiltrated the Green Keepers extensively, although these radicals do not control the guild. Disguised as simple if skilled guild members, the Ashbound spy and cause problems when and where they can. Rather than acting too directly, these spies use scapegoats and pass information to strike teams that come to Fairhaven only for specific missions. Dealings with the Ashbound in or near the city might lead the PCs to those within the Greenkeeper Guild.

Lineage of Dust

The half-elf ir'Lantar family has enjoyed success within Aundair since before Galifar was sundered. Extensive holdings outside Fairhaven, as well as its manor and grounds within, attest to this success. Family history has it that ir'Lantar ancestors lived here when the foundations of Fairhaven were being set. Countess Tensyn ir'Lantar, a well-known sorcerer, has encouraged all her children into service to the Aundairian Crown. Her youngest twins, Alais and Helais, serve as the queen's ambassadors to Breland in Sharn.

Fiends in Fairhaven: The truth is that the ir'Lantar family has been in league with rakshasas for generations. They owe numerous triumphs to their affiliation with the Lords of Dust. All the adults know of the family's true history, and the children are raised to be decorous in appearance but cruel. Helais, one of the Royal Eyes of Aundair who regularly returns to Fairhaven, is a guise used by two rakshasas, Zathara and Nethatar. The ir'Lantirs are willing to go to any length to protect their secret, and their public actions are rarely suspicious.

Precocious Princess

Prince Aurad's adolescent daughter Austasia has taken it into her head that she can become a great explorer. Princess Corrine, rascal that she is, has encouraged Austasia to run away to pursue her dreams, despite the latter's youth and incomplete training. Austasia, who has shown promise, might be hero material one day.

Royal Runaway: Austasia, possibly along with Corrine, leaves Fairhold, disguises herself, and attempts to travel to Sharn. The royal family dispatches trusted agents, perhaps the PCs, to recover the girl. If a foreign power or disreputable organization were to "acquire" the wayward lady, repercussions could be dire. Nationalistic loyalties being what they are, the characters might instead be looking for the princess for Thrane or Karrnath. Adventure could ensue if the PCs just happen to meet Austasia during or after her trip. They could even be implicated as kidnappers if they aren't careful.

Sites

Several notable sites might provide the PCs with interesting tasks to accomplish.

4 - Chalice Center

This district is a major center of travel and shipping in Fairhaven. The House Orien lightning rail station stands just outside its northern gate. A House Lyrandar airship tower, one of three similar towers in the city, marks the ward's southern side. Both dragonmarked houses maintain their enclaves in Chalice Center.

Democracy: Chalice Center is among the most cosmopolitan in Aundair, and one of its well-known citizen philosophers is Thothar Ostren. Thothar advocates for peaceful revolution—the overturning of the crown in favor of populism. Although the Royal Eyes keep tabs on him and have questioned him on occasion, Thothar is too popular in intellectual circles and too peace-minded to silence. Thothar and his patrons might sponsor progressive PCs, and the man is a great source of information within the city. However, those who intend harm to the Aundairian Crown could use Thothar for unwholesome ends.

5 - Distant Exchange

Near the city center, at the base of an airship tower and beyond the customs houses of Chalice Center and Whiteroof, stands the huge bazaar known as Distant Exchange. Local law decrees that nothing native to Aundair can be sold within Distant Exchange. People visit here to purchase foreign goods and rarities, as well as to meet unusual folk such as dragonborn from Q'barra.

Information Exchange: Close to the embassies near Fairhold and several minority districts, Distant

Exchange is also a trading place for information. More than one merchant is loyal to a foreign interest, and agents can talk within the exchange under the guise of doing business. Further, some minorities within Fairhaven use Distant Exchange as a meeting place. Those who know the right person to ask can learn obscure news of distant lands here. Occasionally the intrigue seething under the market's alien atmosphere breaks out in violence for one reason or another.

6 - House Jorasco Citadel

Just north of Distant Exchange, House Jorasco maintains its Fairhaven citadel. Within the walls and tower is a hospital, an extensive herb garden, a medicinal and potion dispensary, and a center of medical learning. Field medics make themselves available for hire within the enclave, but the most potent healers choose to remain inside the enclave as much as possible. Among the latter is Haneela d'Jorasco, who has been known to bring back the dead.

The Grasping of Healing Hands: House Jorasco treads risky political ground within the Fairhaven citadel by engaging in research into healing herbs, reagents, and techniques from the Eldeen Reaches. Those who come into possession of medicinal secrets from the Reaches can find a buyer in House Jorasco. For such treasures, house employees take some risks. They're also willing to use the unpopularity of Reachers against any who claim the house has taken or acquired goods unfairly.

7 - Wayfinder Foundation Headquarters

Lord Boroman ir'Dayne had this four-story building constructed as the major center for the Wayfarer Foundation. It houses a museum, also known informally as the "trophy room," on the first two floors. Upper floors house offices, lecture halls, and meeting rooms, including the Conclave Chamber where the foundation's most prominent members and stewards, the trustees, meet. On these floors, explorers and members of the foundation can arrange or invest in expeditions, as well as trade in relics and monster carcasses. Either sort of object might find its way into the permanent collection in the trophy room.

Lordly Wasting: Lord Boroman ir'Dayne is dying. While on an expedition to Xen'drik, the affable and capable halfling contracted a wasting curse. The curse is slowly destroying the lord's body. Boroman uses his vast wealth to find countermeasures and delay the inevitable, but he is weakened enough that he must use a cane to make his daily walk to and from his manor to the foundation headquarters. Boroman might employ the PCs to travel to any site in which a cure might be located, including back to the mysterious Xen'drik ruins in which the lord contracted the curse.

Mislaid Trust: Clandestine organizations of all sorts have reason to infiltrate the Wayfinder Foundation. A spy, especially among the trustees, could gain a vast array of valuable knowledge and resources. A double-dealing trustee might also plot to help Boroman ir'Dayne into the grave and seize leadership of the foundation. The PCs might be caught in one of these plots, especially if they succeed at finding help for Boroman's curse.

Relic Raiders: Items and valuables from the trophy room have gone missing. No one can find any sign of breaking and entering. Are the thieves working within the foundation building or coming from outside? Perhaps a creature in the trophy room isn't a stuffed model after all? Then again, maybe the trustees have set up an elaborate hoax to test potential recruits or existing members.

About the Author

No one knows what **Chris Sims** actually is. He dwells in dark places and works words. His flesh is nearly as hard as granite, and he is immune to petrification. He has Contributed to titles such as *Dungeon Master's Guide*, *Monster Manual*, *Monster Manual 2*, and *Eberron Campaign Guide*, plus he has worked on *D&D Insider* articles too numerous to mention. He lairs with his wife in the Seattle exurb of Covington, where he keeps his treasure.

City of Aboleths

FORGOTTEN REALMS®

By Bruce R. Cordell
illustration by Michael Franchina

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The aboleth's three eyes blinked in unsyncopated rhythm. Two eyes swiveled to fix on Anusha, and one stared at Yeva.

The creature charged. Its tentacles lashed across the width of the corridor. The air around it churned with a fine mist of slime, and it gave voice to a terrible keening.

Anusha whispered, "Remember, it can't hurt us with a merely physical attack."

"The tentacles aren't our concern," said Yeva. "What worries me is whether we can kill it before its scream quickens too many eggs."

Then the monster was upon them. Anusha brought her dream sword down at an angle. The creature charged full into the intangible blade, forehead first, oblivious to the weapon's presence.

A burst of blue flame limned the creature. One of the creature's tentacles fell limp, and one of its eyes dulled and closed. But it kept moving, and screaming.

Anusha instinctively stepped out of its path to its left, Yeva to its right.

As it swept past, Yeva glared at the monster, her eyes achieving a lethal focus. A barrage of rainbow colors swept across the aboleth. It shuddered and twisted as tears and cuts spontaneously appeared on its skin in a dozen places. Dark blood oozed forth to mix with the aboleth's coat of slime.

The aboleth shuddered to a halt. It began to flail the space around it with its still functioning tentacles. Its keening continued unabated.

Anusha slashed and hewed at the slick bulk with abandon.

"Be quiet!" she yelled, and cut the beast again. Its maddening scream finally guttered out.

"Anusha!" came Yeva's yell.

She followed the direction of Yeva's pointing finger with her gaze, back down the corridor where the aboleth had emerged.

A jelly sac of eggs on the ceiling containing three or four particularly large white orbs was quivering and swinging like a pendulum.

One of the eggs in the mass deflated. A flaccid abolethic bulk slid forth and slumped to the tunnel floor. Then another. And another. Two were nearly as large as the aboleth she and Yeva had just dispatched, and one was only half that big. But the smaller eggs also gave up their progeny, producing toy-size aboleths that plopped directly onto their larger siblings, or slid down the walls on either side.

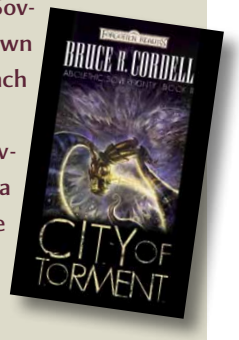
The creatures jerked and shuddered, slowly blinking their newborn eyes. They righted themselves within the corridor, flexing their slug bodies and grabbing with their questing tentacles. They looked like nothing so much as a writhing swarm of worms.

Then each and every one cried out, keening like the one they'd just slain. The sound nearly dashed Anusha from her dreamform. Up and down the corridor, all the eggs sacks that hadn't reacted to the first aboleth's scream twitched and shuddered.

"Run!" she shrieked. She needn't have said it. Yeva was dashing away up the corridor.

City of Torment

The novel *City of Torment* features a trip to a subterranean fortress of the somnambulant aboleths, where the main character is bent on killing the Eldest in its sleep. But he isn't the only one bound for the hidden city. A warlock, an arch fey, a pirate, and a high priestess of the Abolethic Sovereignty all have designs of their own on the Eldest—if they don't kill each other first.



City of Torment describes several unique locations ideal for a D&D® game encounter. One is the egg nursery of Xxiphu, as adapted here.

http://www.cityoftorment.com

Finding the Path

Encounter Level 17 (1,600 XP)

Setup

This skill challenge can work for you in one of two ways. You can use it to allow the PCs to reach their intended destination without incident, or you could set it up to allow the PCs to encounter the cyst (as an ending destination for a reason of your own). The default in this case is the former situation.

Egg Nurseries of Xxiphu

The aboleths of Xxiphu have slept away eons, and only now does the city stir toward wakefulness, and its beslimed denizens begin to rouse, at least those that have not completely petrified.

One of the quickest ways the city of aboleths can rejuvenate its population is to birth new citizens. Thousands of eggs line the winding tunnels of its egg nursery. These eggs, clumped in glistening sacs, have been laid over the centuries by lone, wakeful aboleths. The egg clusters clog the irregular, partly drowned tunnels of the nursery.

Lost in the Egg Tunnels **Level 17**
Skill Challenge XP 1,600

The bleak tunnels split, and split again. Some are dry, others share their course with cold water, and some of the tunnels are completely drowned. After traveling for hours, you realize that you have no idea where you started.

The PCs must find their way through the network of confusing, partially drowned egg tunnels. The PCs can make one check using either Dungeoneering or Perception once per hour. The Endurance checks must be made once per hour.

Complexity
3 (requires 8 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills
Dungeoneering, Endurance, Perception

Victory
The heroes make their way through the egg tunnels without incident.

Defeat
On a defeat with zero successes, the heroes are ambushed by three aboleth behemoths and must begin the challenge anew. Any other defeat leads the characters to the Aboleth Egg Cyst encounter described below.

Dungeoneering
DC 25 (3 successes maximum, standard action)
The PC notices that certain particularly thick deposits of slime might lead to active aboleths, and he or she can point comrades down tunnels less likely to lead to active monsters.

Endurance
DC 25 (2 successes maximum, standard action) At least two characters in the party must make Endurance checks each hour to resist the debilitating effects of wandering through Xxiphu. A failed check indicates that all members of the party lose 1 healing surge, in addition to counting as a failure for the challenge.
The tunnels drain vitality, but a few preparations can offset the chill and damp.

Perception
DC 25 (3 successes maximum, standard action)
The PC notes tiny signs that a particular route might lead through to another route, instead of another dead end or a loop back.

Aboleth Egg Cyst

Encounter Level 18 (10,050 XP)

Setup

15 aboleth hatchlings (H)
2 aboleth lashers (L)
1 aboleth slime mage (M)

Heroes arrive in the cyst in the southeastern section of the chamber after swimming a 10-foot-diameter flooded tunnel for a distance of at least 30 feet. When PCs move more 3 or more squares into this chamber, the eggs in the chamber hatch, and the following encounter occurs. If the PCs proceed into the stream separating the southeastern portion of the cyst from the larger, northwestern portion of the chamber, the Greater Aboleth Egg Cyst encounter begins (even if all the creatures in the following encounter have yet to be dispatched!).

Adapting This Encounter to Your Game

What if your characters are not venturing into Xxiphu? That might be the case for the vast majority of Dungeon Masters, so use the two-stage encounter described here as a subterranean lair, and make it accessible from a flooded side tunnel in your dungeon. Thus, the Aboleth Egg Cyst encounter represents an interesting side encounter. Or, you could place an item or kidnapped person of importance (perhaps converted to a servitor) in the chamber to make the cyst more central to your game.

When the characters see the chamber, read:

A humid, low-ceilinged cavern stretches away from where the drowned tunnel provides an entrance. Diffused green-tinged light permeates the twisted, irregular area. Attached here and there on naked rock quiver masses of white orbs protected by a translucent layer of slime. Gelatinous and pale like fish eggs, the orbs reek of brine.

Perception Check

DC 25 *A hollow in the western portion of the chamber is filled with gelatinous slime, but something far larger than a single egg lies unmoving beneath the goo. This form resembles a gargantuan slug with tentacles.*

When the encounter begins, read:

One egg dissolves, revealing a miniature aboleth. Then another. And another. In moments, a dozen toy-size creatures jerk shudder about the chamber, slowly blinking their newborn eyes.

A churning, bubbling sound to the west presages an aboleth surging from the slime-filled hollow, spraying goo everywhere. Another aboleth with similar coloration bursts from the water in the northwestern corner of the chamber.

15 Aboleth Hatchlings (H) Level 16 Minion Skirmisher
Small aberrant magical beast (aquatic) XP 350

Initiative +17 **Senses** Perception +8; darkvision
Disorienting Haze aura 1; any enemy within the aura takes a -2 penalty to saving throws against daze and dominate effects. This aura's penalty is cumulative with the penalties imposed by the aura of other aboleth hatchlings.
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 30; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 26
Speed 8, swim 10
⊕ **Tentacle** (standard; at-will)
+21 vs. AC; 8 damage (12 damage against a dazed or dominated target).
Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 10
Str 20 (+13) **Dex** 25 (+15) **Wis** 10 (+8)
Con 15 (+10) **Int** 15 (+10) **Cha** 11 (+8)

2 Aboleth Lashers (L) Level 17 Brute
Large aberrant magical beast (aquatic) XP 1,600

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +14; darkvision
Mucus Haze aura 5; any enemy treats the area within the aura as difficult terrain.
HP 200; **Bloodied** 100
AC 29; **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 25
Speed 5, swim 10
⊕ **Tentacle** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 2d8 + 8 damage (4d8 + 8 damage against a dazed target), and the target is dazed (save ends).
Combat Advantage
The aboleth lasher makes an extra *tentacle* attack against any enemy granting combat advantage to it.
Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 20
Skills Arcana +19, Dungeoneering +19, Insight +19
Str 26 (+16) **Dex** 16 (+11) **Wis** 22 (+14)
Con 20 (+13) **Int** 23 (+14) **Cha** 17 (+11)

Aboleth Slime Mage (M) Level 17 Artillery (Leader)
Large aberrant magical beast (aquatic) XP 1,600

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision
Mucus Haze aura 5; any enemy treats the area within the aura as difficult terrain.
HP 128; **Bloodied** 64
AC 31; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 29
Speed 5, swim 10
⊕ **Tentacle** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +24 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage (3d8 + 6 damage against a dazed target), and the target is dazed (save ends).
Slime Orb (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 10; +22 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 7 psychic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).
Dominate (standard; at-will) ✦ **Charm**
Ranged 10; targets a dazed humanoid; +22 vs. Will; the target is dominated (save ends). An aboleth slime mage can dominate only one creature at a time.
Slime Burst (standard; encounter) ✦ **Psychic**
Area burst 4 within 10; targets enemies; +20 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 7 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends). *Aftereffect*: The target is slowed (save ends).
Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 20
Skills Arcana +19, Dungeoneering +20, Insight +20
Str 23 (+14) **Dex** 16 (+11) **Wis** 25 (+15)
Con 20 (+13) **Int** 23 (+14) **Cha** 20 (+13)

Tactics

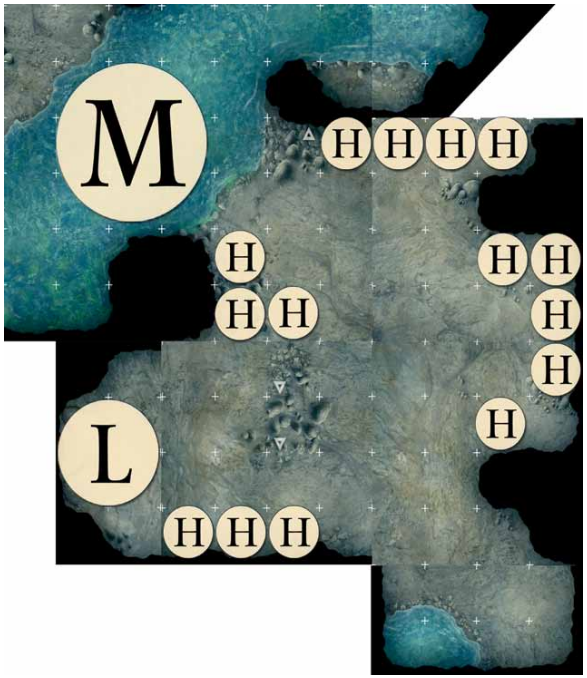
The aboleth hatchlings seek to surround intruders and catch them in their *disorienting haze* aura, which makes the aboleth lashers' daze conditions delivered by its tentacle attacks all the more effective. The same auras allow the aboleth slime mage, which rises from the water in the northwestern portion of the chamber, to achieve better results with its *dominate* ability, as well as its tentacle attacks if PCs close on it.

The aboleths in this area of the cavern do not retreat; they fight to the death. However, if any PC ventures into the larger cavern and triggers the next encounter, the aboleths here are added to that encounter as well.

Dreams of the Eldest

The Eldest lies in deathlike sleep and its memories coat various portions of Xxiphu's interior like frozen dew. Over the centuries, the dreams of mortals were sometimes snared as well, so that the icy encrustations within Xxiphu are pocked with the frozen images of dead dreamers. But any creature that ventures too physically close to such an encrustation is in danger of having its mind sucked into the icy crystal. As its body slumps, dead, a frozen image of the victim appears in the ice.

✦ **Mindcatching Ice Terrain:** Any creature that begins its turn adjacent to an encrustation of mindcatching ice takes ongoing 15 psychic damage and is immobilized (save ends).



Features of the Area

Illumination: Dim. The air glows with a green, translucent radiance (which tiny floating particles of bioluminescent mucus produce).

Boulder Patches: Boulder patches are difficult terrain.

Egg Sacs: Clusters of aboleth egg sacs (AC 10, other defenses 10; hp 25) coat the wall. A subset of the egg sacs hatch when the PCs first enter, but most of the eggs are too small. However, given 1d4 days, a new brood of aboleth hatches. The industrious application of weapon and spell can destroy egg sacs.

Water: The drowned sections of the map are exceptionally deep—in fact, these sections are the top portion of other drowned tunnels that lead into the complex. Characters who fight in the water abide by underwater rules (*Dungeon Master's Guide*®, page 45).

Greater Aboleth Egg Cyst

Encounter Level 18 (11,800 XP)

Setup

1 aboleth behemoth (B)
1 aboleth overseer (O)
2 aboleth suffocators (S)

Player characters who find their way into the southeastern portion of the egg cyst discover that the only way out is through it. To continue on their way to their destination, they must traverse the larger portion of the chamber and either defeat or bypass the aboleths dozing there, then safely descend the chasm on the western side.

From the southeastern portion of the cyst, the aboleths on the tactical map are not visible initially. Several are submerged in the water, but the overseer hovers just below the lip of the chasm.

If the PCs have fought the aboleths described in the first encounter above, the aboleths here are well aware of their presence, so stealth checks by PCs fail.

In fact, if the PCs dally longer than 2 hours in the smaller section of the egg cyst, the aboleths here grow impatient and launch the attack on their own.

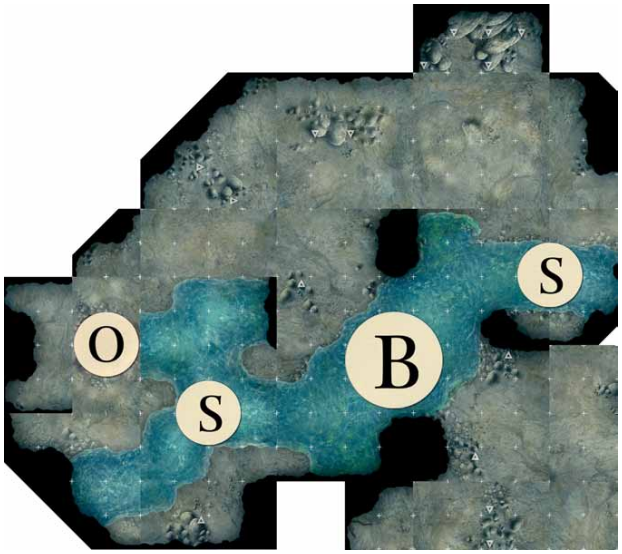
Otherwise they wait until at least one PC has advanced at least 3 squares into the room, then they attack. A Perception check might provide characters with an action in the surprise round as the PCs enter the chamber.

When PCs gaze into the greater cyst, read:

Green-tinted light permeates this twisted, irregular cavern. Dark water slowly runs through half this cavern before plunging into a chasm to the west. Here and there, rock protrudes from the floor, looking almost like the petrified remains of a long-dead prehistoric fish or bony slug.

Perception Check

DC 27: *A huge shape hovers just below the water's surface. At first it appeared to be just a large boulder, but the eyes and slowly waving tentacles give the creature away as an aboleth at least 15 feet wide.*



Aboleth Behemoth (B)	**Level 19 Elite Soldier**
Huge aberrant magical beast (aquatic)	XP 4,800
Initiative +15	**Senses** Perception +13; darkvision
Mucus Haze aura 5; any enemy treats the area within the aura as difficult terrain. While the aboleth is bloodied, enemies within the aura take a -2 penalty to saving throws against dazed and dominated effects.	
HP 362; **Bloodied** 181	
AC 35; **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 30	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 5, fly 7, swim 8	
Action Points 1	
⊕ **Tentacle** (standard; at-will)	
Reach 3; +24 vs. AC; 2d10 + 6 damage, and the target is grabbed and dazed (save ends).	
⸸ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will)	
The aboleth behemoth makes two *tentacle* attacks, each against different targets.	
⸸ **Triple Attack** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞)	
The aboleth behemoth makes three *tentacle* attacks, each against different targets.	
✧ **Whipping Tentacles** (standard; recharge when first bloodied)	
Close burst 3; targets enemies in burst; +22 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 8 damage, and the aboleth behemoth slides the target 3 squares.	
Mind Bore (free action, when the aboleth damages a dazed or dominated target with a tentacle attack; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**	
The triggering attack deals ongoing 10 psychic damage to the target (save ends).	
Persistent Grab	
An aboleth behemoth can sustain a grab on all creatures it is currently grabbing with a single minor action.	
Threatening Reach	
An aboleth behemoth can make opportunity attacks against any enemy within 3 squares of it.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 20
Skills Arcana +11, Dungeoneering +18, Insight +18	
Str 28 (+18)	**Dex** 18 (+13) **Wis** 18 (+13)
Con 21 (+14)	**Int** 5 (+6) **Cha** 8 (+8)

Aboleth Overseer (O) Level 18 Elite Controller (Leader)
Large aberrant magical beast (aquatic) XP 4,000

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +16; darkvision
Mucus Haze aura 5; any enemy treats the area within the aura as difficult terrain.
HP 348; **Bloodied** 174
AC 35; **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 33
Saving Throws +2
Speed 5, swim 10
Action Points 1

⊕ **Tentacle** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +22 vs. AC; 1d8 + 8 damage (3d8 + 8 damage against a dazed target), and the target is dazed (save ends).

Psychic Slime (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ✦ **Psychic**
Close burst 10; targets enemies; +20 vs. Will; 2d8 + 8 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Dominate (standard; at-will) ✦ **Charm**
Ranged 10; targets a dazed humanoid; +20 vs. Will; the target is dominated (save ends). An aboleth overseer can dominate only one creature at a time.

Enslave (standard; at-will) ✦ **Charm, Psychic**
Ranged 5; targets a dominated creature; +20 vs. Will; 6d8 + 8 psychic damage. A target reduced to 0 hit points or fewer by this attack doesn't die but becomes enslaved in preparation for the Aboleth Servitor ritual. Enslaved targets are dominated, and only the death of the overseer can end this domination. Once a creature is enslaved, an aboleth overseer is free to dominate other creatures.

Invisibility (minor; encounter) ✦ **Illusion**
The aboleth overseer and one ally within 10 squares of it turn invisible until the end of the aboleth overseer's next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 20
Skills Arcana +20, Dungeoneering +21, Insight +21
Str 26 (+17) **Dex** 16 (+12) **Wis** 25 (+16)
Con 22 (+15) **Int** 23 (+15) **Cha** 22 (+15)

2 Aboleth Suffocators (S) Level 16 Lurker
Large aberrant magical beast (aquatic) XP 1,400

Initiative +19 **Senses** Perception +12; darkvision
Suffocating Haze aura 2; any enemy within the aura takes a -2 penalty to defenses and saving throws.
HP 124; **Bloodied** 62
AC 30; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 26
Speed 5, fly 8, swim 10

⊕ **Tentacle** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +21 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Brain Lash (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Psychic**
Close blast 5; +19 vs. Will; 2d8 + 7 psychic damage, and ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends).

Mind Bore (free action, when the aboleth damages a dazed or dominated target with a tentacle attack; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
The triggering attack deals 2d10 extra psychic damage to the target.

Pillar of Slime (immediate reaction, when an attack damages the aboleth suffocator; at-will) ✦ **Polymorph**
The aboleth suffocator changes into a mass of amorphous slime. While in this form, the aboleth is insubstantial, cannot make attacks, and can use its *slime shift* power. The aboleth can resume its normal form as a minor action, ending this effect.

Slime Shift (move action, usable only when affected by *pillar of slime*; at-will)
The aboleth shifts its speed.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 20
Skills Arcana +17, Dungeoneering +17, Insight +17
Str 21 (+13) **Dex** 25 (+15) **Wis** 18 (+12)
Con 22 (+14) **Int** 18 (+12) **Cha** 11 (+8)

Tactics

The aboleths attempt to daze and dominate as many PCs as possible, so that the aboleth overseer can use its *enslave* ability on those deemed vulnerable. The overseer attempts to *enslave* as many PCs as it can. If the overseer sees that its group is losing the battle, it flees and sends whatever slaves it might have into combat to help cover its escape.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Dim. The air glows with a green, translucent radiance (which tiny floating particles of bioluminescent mucus produce).

Boulder Patches: Boulder patches are difficult terrain.

Water: The drowned sections of the map are exceptionally deep—in fact, these sections are the top portion of other drowned tunnels that lead into the complex. Characters who fight in the water abide by underwater rules (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 45).

Chasm: This chasm drops 100 feet (10d10 falling damage) to a landing, which represents the path the PCs need to take to continue their journey through Xxiphu (or a subterranean location appropriate to your game).

Treasure: Hidden away in one of the boulder patches are a level 17 treasure parcel and a level 19 treasure parcel.

Egg Sacs: Clusters of aboleth egg sacs (AC 10, other defenses 10; hp 25) coat the wall. A subset of the egg sacs hatches when the PCs first enter, but most of the eggs are too small. However, given 1d4 days, a new brood of aboleth hatches. The industrious application of weapon and spell can destroy egg sacs.

Aboleth

Horrors first spawned in a realm far from the world and its echoes, aboleths are malevolent and vile, and they seek to bend the minds of other living creatures to their purposes.

A fine haze of mucus suffuses the air around an aboleth's soft, gelatinous skin. Muscular tentacles sprout from this primeval slug's enormous, slime-sheathed body. A variable number of eyes, but always more than two, are scattered across its bulk. Every so often, a tooth-studded tongue emerges from its lipless tri-slit mouth.

Unlike aboleths of lesser lineages, those of Xxiphu can take to the air like fish swim in the sea.

Aboleth Hatchling **Level 16 Minion Skirmisher**
Small aberrant magical beast (aquatic) **XP 350**

Initiative +17 **Senses** Perception +8; darkvision
Disorienting Haze aura 1; any enemy within the aura takes a -2 penalty to saving throws against daze and dominate effects. This aura's penalty is cumulative with the penalties imposed by the aura of other aboleth hatchlings.
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 30; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 26
Speed 8, swim 10

⊕ **Tentacle** (standard; at-will)
+21 vs. AC; 8 damage (12 damage against a dazed or dominated target).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 10
Str 20 (+13) **Dex** 25 (+15) **Wis** 10 (+8)
Con 15 (+10) **Int** 15 (+10) **Cha** 11 (+8)

Aboleth Hatchling Tactics

Aboleth hatchlings surround their foes, attempting to disorient them by sheer number (*disorienting haze*).

Aboleth Suffocator **Level 16 Lurker**
Large aberrant magical beast (aquatic) **XP 1,400**

Initiative +19 **Senses** Perception +12; darkvision
Suffocating Haze aura 2; any enemy within the aura takes a -2 penalty to defenses and saving throws.
HP 124; **Bloodied** 62
AC 30; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 26
Speed 5, fly 8, swim 10

⊕ **Tentacle** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +21 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Brain Lash (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Psychic**
Close blast 5; +19 vs. Will; 2d8 + 7 psychic damage, and ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends).

Mind Bore (free action, when the aboleth damages a dazed or dominated target with a tentacle attack; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
The triggering attack deals 2d10 extra psychic damage to the target.

Pillar of Slime (immediate reaction, when an attack damages the aboleth suffocator; at-will) ✦ **Polymorph**
The aboleth suffocator changes into a mass of amorphous slime. While in this form, the aboleth is insubstantial, cannot make attacks, and can use its *slime shift* power. The aboleth can resume its normal form as a minor action, ending this effect.

Slime Shift (move action, usable only when affected by *pillar of slime*; at-will)
The aboleth shifts its speed.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 20
Skills Arcana +17, Dungeoneering +17, Insight +17
Str 21 (+13) **Dex** 25 (+15) **Wis** 18 (+12)
Con 22 (+14) **Int** 18 (+12) **Cha** 11 (+8)

Aboleth Suffocator Tactics

The aboleth suffocator can put the fear of drowning in its foes with its *suffocating haze* aura. The suffocator relies on its *pillar of slime* ability to extract itself from dangerous situations or to move closer to allies. It uses *tentacle* and then *mind bore* on foes that it or its allies have already dazed or dominated so that it can deal a small burst of extra damage.

Aboleth Perceptor **Level 17 Soldier**
Large aberrant magical beast (aquatic) **XP 1,600**

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +15; truesight 10
Mucus of Detection aura 5; the aboleth ignores concealment, total concealment, and cover when attacking any creature within its aura.
HP 168; **Bloodied** 84
AC 33; **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 26
Speed 5, fly 8, swim 10

⊕ **Tentacle** (standard; at-will)
Reach 3; +23 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target is pulled 3 squares and marked by the perceptor until the end of the perceptor's next turn.

Eye of Madness (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 5; +21 vs. Will; 2d8 + 7 psychic damage, and the target is dazed and marked (save ends both). Any enemy adjacent to the target takes half damage and is marked (save ends).

Punishing Madness (immediate interrupt, when an enemy marked by the perceptor makes an attack that does not include the perceptor; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 10; +21 vs. Will; 2d8 + 7 psychic damage, and the target gains vulnerable 10 psychic (save ends).

Slime Path (move; recharge ⚄ ⚃)
The perceptor shifts 5 squares to a space adjacent to a creature it has marked. The target grants combat advantage to the perceptor until the end of the perceptor's turn.

Mind Bore (free action, when the aboleth damages a dazed or dominated target with a tentacle attack; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
The triggering attack deals 2d8 extra psychic damage to the target.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 20
Skills Arcana +16, Dungeoneering +15, Insight +15
Str 19 (+12) **Dex** 20 (+13) **Wis** 15 (+10)
Con 24 (+15) **Int** 17 (+11) **Cha** 17 (+11)

Aboleth Perceptor Tactics

The aboleth perceptor plays an important role in any group of aboleths it accompanies; its *mucus of detection* aura allows its allies to target hidden, concealed, or even invisible foes. Because this aura requires the perceptor to be close to those it reveals, it is relatively adept in melee. It can also quickly move to foes it first detects with its truesight with *slime path*.

Aboleth Behemoth (B)	Level 19 Elite Soldier
Huge aberrant magical beast (aquatic)	XP 4,800

Initiative +15 **Senses** Perception +13; darkvision
Mucus Haze aura 5; any enemy treats the area within the aura as difficult terrain. While the aboleth is bloodied, enemies within the aura take a -2 penalty to saving throws against dazed and dominated effects.
HP 362; **Bloodied** 181
AC 35; **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 30
Saving Throws +2
Speed 5, fly 7, swim 8
Action Points 1

⊕ **Tentacle** (standard; at-will)
Reach 3; +24 vs. AC; 2d10 + 6 damage, and the target is grabbed and dazed (save ends).

Double Attack (standard; at-will)
The aboleth behemoth makes two *tentacle* attacks, each against different targets.

Triple Attack (standard; recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞)
The aboleth behemoth makes three *tentacle* attacks, each against different targets.

Whipping Tentacles (standard; recharge when first bloodied)
Close burst 3; targets enemies in burst; +22 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 8 damage, and the aboleth behemoth slides the target 3 squares.

Mind Bore (free action, when the aboleth damages a dazed or dominated target with a tentacle attack; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
The triggering attack deals ongoing 10 psychic damage to the target (save ends).

Persistent Grab
An aboleth behemoth can sustain a grab on all creatures it is currently grabbing with a single minor action.

Threatening Reach
An aboleth behemoth can make opportunity attacks against any enemy within 3 squares of it.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 20
Skills Arcana +11, Dungeoneering +18, Insight +18

Str 28 (+18)	**Dex** 18 (+13)	**Wis** 18 (+13)
Con 21 (+14)	**Int** 5 (+6)	**Cha** 8 (+8)

Aboleth Behemoth Tactics

The aboleth behemoth takes up space with its huge bulk, and it uses *threatening reach* to full advantage. With its nest of tentacles, it makes *triple attacks* as soon as the ability recharges, and *double attacks* otherwise. When bloodied, it's *mucus haze* aura's secondary effect kicks in so that all creatures within the aura have greater trouble shaking off daze and dominate effects.

Aboleth Master	Level 22 Elite Controller
Large aberrant magical beast (aquatic)	XP 8,300

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +23; darkvision
Mindbending Mucus aura 5; any enemy within the aura takes a -2 penalty to Will against charm attacks and psychic attacks.
HP 418; **Bloodied** 209
AC 38; **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 33, **Will** 36
Saving Throws +2
Speed 5, fly 8, swim 10
Action Points 1

⊕ **Tentacle** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +26 vs. AC; 2d8 + 10 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Body Puppet (minor; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 10; +24 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 4 psychic damage, and the aboleth slides the target 5 squares.

Dominate (standard; at-will) ✦ **Charm**
Ranged 10; targets a dazed creature; +24 vs. Will; the target is dominated (save ends). An aboleth master can dominate only 1 creature at a time.

Enslave (standard; at-will) ✦ **Charm, Psychic**
Ranged 10; targets a dominated creature; +22 vs. Will; 5d8 + 7 psychic damage. A target reduced to 0 hit points or fewer by this attack doesn't die but becomes enslaved in preparation for the Aboleth Servitor ritual. Enslaved targets are dominated, and only the death of the master can end this domination. Once a creature is enslaved, an aboleth master is free to dominate other creatures.

Mind Snap (minor; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 10; +24 vs. Will; 1d10 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Command Thrall (minor; encounter) ✦ **Charm**
The aboleth master commands a dominated target to use any power it knows on its turn, not just at-will powers.

Mind Bore (free action, when the aboleth damages a dazed or dominated target with a tentacle attack; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
The triggering attack deals ongoing 10 psychic damage to the target (save ends).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech, telepathy 20
Skills Arcana +22, Dungeoneering +23, Insight +23

Str 30 (+21)	**Dex** 13 (+12)	**Wis** 25 (+18)
Con 25 (+18)	**Int** 22 (+17)	**Cha** 26 (+19)

Aboleth Master Tactics

The aboleth master **uses** *mindbending mucus* to improve the chance that charm and psychic attacks hit its enemies. It can use *body puppet* and *mind snap*, both minor powers, in the same round and then follow up with *dominate*. Once it has dominated a target, it uses *enslave* hoping to free up its attention to dominate others.

Aboleth Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Dungeoneering check.

DC 32: Aboleths are effectively immortal and, barring death through accident or violence, continue to grow over their endless life spans. However after one reaches Huge size, its rate of growth slows so that changes can be noted only over geologic time. Some say that each aboleth contains the entire racial memory of every aboleth in its particular blood lineage.

DC 33: For all their intelligence, aboleths do not recognize themselves as individuals; all their activities and works are devoid of true cognizance. They toil through the centuries without knowledge of their own existence. They do not have a sense of "self" and thus aren't motivated by the same things that motivate other creatures. Yet they enact schemes of surpassing evil, fight enemies with potent abilities and tactics, and build unfathomable abodes deep below the earth, all without cognizant self awareness of the terror and atrocity they wreak.

DC 34: Aboleths have endured the rise and fall of worlds and apocalypse upon apocalypse. They are old past understanding, and their origins predate the current cosmos in which mortals (and their gods) erroneously believe they are so central. The oldest aboleth colony of all is the city of Xxiphu, and the oldest aboleth, called the Eldest, rules it.

DC 36: Aboleths native to Xxiphu enjoy a mystical connection with an orrerylike device housed in the city's foundations. This device grants the aboleths of Xxiphu (and certain allied creatures, such as individual krakens and morkoths) the ability to fly almost as swiftly as regular aboleths can swim through water.

DC 38: The Eldest sits a deathlike vigil that vitrified its body, rendering its flesh indistinguishable from stone, while its mind flashes over the eons, experiencing only a single thought every 10,000 years. Despite its torpor, lesser aboleths serve it and look for the day they can wake the Eldest, and in so doing, bring about the final age of the world.

Encounter Groups

Encounters within Xxiphu might appear to be easy because many aboleths travel alone. However, that ease is an illusion, because Xxiphu is a city, and more aboleths bide in the honeycombed hollows of the massive edifice, and they respond quickly to the sound of invaders.

Level 17 Encounter (XP 8,750)
- ✦ 5 aboleth hatchlings (level 16 minion)
- ✦ 1 aboleth overseer (level 18 elite controller)
- ✦ 1 aboleth slime mage (level 17 artillery)
- ✦ 1 aboleth suffocator (level 16 lurker)

Level 21 Encounter (XP 18,050)
- ✦ 1 aboleth behemoth (level 19 elite soldier)
- ✦ 1 aboleth lasher (level 17 brute)
- ✦ 1 aboleth master (level 22 elite controller)
- ✦ 1 aboleth perceptor (level 17 soldier)
- ✦5 aboleth servitors (level 16 minion)

About the Author

Bruce R. Cordell is an Origins and ENnie award-winning game designer whose long list of professional credits include the new Forgotten Realms *Campaign Guide*™, *Keep on the Shadowfell*™, *Draconomicon I: Chromatic Dragons*™ and *Open Grave: Secrets of the Undead*™. Bruce is also an author of Forgotten Realms novels, including *City of Torment*, the second book in the Abolethic Sovereignty series.

FORGOTTEN REALMS®

MONUMENT OF THE ANCIENTS

By Brian R. James & Matt James

An adventure for 13th-level characters

illustrations by Eric Belisle

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Panicked refugees are pouring into the port city of Phlan, fleeing from barbarian attacks in the Moonsea North. Something ominous and ancient drives the horse nomads to attack their neighbors. Poised to shatter the ancient monument keeping him from Faerûn, a "lost god" from Toril's past sends an agent from the Elemental Chaos to herald his long prophesized return...

Monument of the Ancients is a 4th-Edition Dungeons & Dragons® adventure for five characters of 13th-level. This adventure is set in the Forgotten Realms® campaign setting. The *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide* and the *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide* contain material that can enhance the play experience, but neither of those books is essential to this adventure.

In 1988, Strategic Simulations, Inc. (SSI) published the first computer adaptation of the Dungeons & Dragons® roleplaying game, entitled *Pool of Radiance*. Like the adventure you're reading right now, *Pool of Radiance* was set in Phlan and its environs.

More personally, *Pool of Radiance* was my first exposure to the fantastic world of the Forgotten Realms® campaign setting. Enjoying the rich setting and its detailed history, I picked up a copy of the module *Ruins of Adventure* from my local hobby shop and started a new D&D® campaign set in the ruined city of Phlan. I was hooked, and twenty-one years later I remain just as passionate about the Realms as that 14-year-old boy firing up *Pool of Radiance* on his family's Commodore 128.

It's with great pride that I present to you an adventure set in the great city of Phlan; and doubly so, since I've had the pleasure of designing this adventure with my not-so-little brother Matthew. Enjoy.

Brian R. James

Background

As it has countless times since its founding, the city of Phlan once again stands unknowingly at the precipice of utter ruin. Hundreds of miles to the northwest, in an overgrown hollow of the Frozen Forest, stands a towering edifice of stone and iron constructed during the First Flowering by a lost civilization of man: the Monument of the Ancients.

If myth and legend are to be believed, the antediluvian monument defends a region of Faerûn where the boundary between the world of Toril and the Elemental Chaos is weakest. At the monument's heart lies the Anchor of Chaos, an arcane bulwark sealing a cosmic fissure between the planes. Were the enchantment powering the Anchor to fail, the Moonsea North would stand defenseless against a full-scale invasion by forces of elemental evil. Unbeknownst to the citizens of Phlan, that day is nearly upon them.

Seven Sigils War

Scholars knowledgeable in the study of civilizations past have a saying: "Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it." Those are wise words indeed, for the calamity about to befall the Moonsea North has occurred at least once before.

In the centuries leading up to the raising of the Standing Stone and the signing of the Dales Compact, the Moonsea Reaches were veritably unsettled by "civilized man." The fabled precursor civilization, architects of the Citadel of the Raven and Monument of the Ancients among others, had long before descended into barbarism, intermarrying with the indigenous tribes of the region.

In the fifth century before Dalereckoning, the arrogant Empire of Netheril constructed a massive gate in the Gods' Legion Mountains (modern-day Desertsmouth Mountains), foolishly seeking to conquer settlements in the outer planes beyond Toril. Unfortunately for the archwizards, immortal beings more powerful than themselves poured through the gate into Netheril.

High in intelligence though lacking in wisdom, the Netherese archwizards of Rdiuz sought to counteract the immortal invaders by pitting them against their longtime nemesis, elementals. Knowing of the legend of the Monument of the Ancients, the foolish archwizards intentionally sabotaged the Anchor of Chaos, releasing a primordial and his minions into the Realms.

After raging for more than a century, the horrendous conflict known to historians as the Seven Sigils War ended with the Netherese finally imprisoning or banishing the great majority of planar beings, both elemental and immortal. One primordial, however, escaped.

Maram of the Great Spear

Fleeing northeast toward the lands where his connection to the Elemental Chaos was strongest, the ancient primordial Maram of the Great Spear carved a swath of destruction through the heart of the great Rystall Wood. On the far side of the elvish forest, Maram easily subjugated the primitive human tribes, who soon worshiped the elemental prince as a god.

Maram's designs on the region were cut short, however, when in the Year of Sycophants (-357 DR) an unlikely coalition joined forces to confront the ancient primordial. Marching north alongside Horreb artificers came the war wizards of Barze, the horse nomads of Varm, the gnoll warriors of Flindyke, the goliath hunters of Mount Akoro, and the gnome

hammers of Forharn. This bizarre alliance was led by three equally improbable heroes hailing from lands beyond the Moonsea North: a shadowy assassin, a brooding necromancer, and a dour warlord.

Under the icy boughs of the Frozen Forest, thousands of brave souls, man and beast, valiantly gave their lives to cleave a path to the Monument of the Ancients. There, in the shadow of the great ziggurat, the leaders of the alliance faced off against the raging primordial. In the end, the heroes were victorious, driving Maram back to the Elemental Chaos and resealing the Anchor of Chaos. The celebration was short lived, for soon the victors came to measure the full scope of their losses.

Ill fortune dogged the expedition on its long trek home. Many of the injured succumbed to infections that magical healing could not cure. Without the Dark Three to hold the coalition together—the brooding heroes chose instead to remain behind and study the monument further—the alliance soon dissolved and parted ways. Of the 50,000 souls that marched to war, less than 2,000 returned to their homes.

Less than a year later, the kingdom of Barze would lie in utter ruin, its cities overrun and set aflame by the Twisted Ones and their demonic general Tyranthraxus. Some whisper that the Dark Three had a hand in unleashing this new menace against their former allies, but that is a tale for another adventure . . .

Recent Events

Despite inhospitable winter weather and rough terrain, trails leading into Phlan from communities in the north are typically open year round. So it came as a bit of concern to city officials when trade caravans from the north abruptly stopped arriving in the markets of Phlan a few weeks ago.

Within days, a trickle of refugees arrived in the city with alarming tales about horse nomads overtaking their caravans and setting them aflame. As the days progressed, more refugees arrived, all telling similar tales of growing barbarian aggression.

Troops from Castle Vathar (an ancient keep north of the Phlan in the eastern foothills of the Dragonspine Mountains) increased patrols throughout The Ride, but still the attacks increased.

Finally, not fully a tenday past, the settlement of Whitehorn (a small mining community in the remote White Peaks) came under barbarian attack. Fearful for their lives, panic-stricken refugees in the thousands poured into Phlan not only from Whitehorn but also Verdigris, Ilinvur, and smaller communities up and down The Ride.

Hook: Grim Tidings

With the refugee problem growing more dire every day and its military forces stretched thin, Phlan is in need of Heroes. Lord Protector Anivar Daoran spares no expense but sends for those brave enough to quell the barbarian uprising in the north. Accepting the commission, the PCs set sail for Phlan immediately, borne across the Moonsea in a swift, four-masted schooner.

Hook: Fey Crossroad

The heroes are far from the Moonsea Reaches and wholly ignorant of the growing threat to that part of the world, but fate sometimes has a way of calling heroes to action.

Half a world away, the PCs make camp under the light of the full moon, Selûne's silver radiance filling their dreams with acts of glory against impossible odds. When they awake, the adventurers discover they are no longer in the familiar territory where they camped the night before. The PCs later discover that they inadvertently triggered a fey crossroad and were peaceably teleported to the Quivering Forest not a mile from Phlan.

The Quests

"Monument of the Ancients" offers a few opportunities to earn quest XP. Provided here are the adventure's major quests. Minor quests are included throughout the adventure proper.

Major Quest: Bring Me Their Heads!
The Lord Protector has demanded the heads of the barbarian warlords. This brutal act is hardly heroic, but it will grant the heroes favor in the Lord Protector's eyes. **Reward**: 4,000 XP

Major Quest: Seal the Anchor of Chaos
The Varm chieftain begs the PCs to thwart Maram's return by sealing the planar fissure at the Anchor of Chaos. **Reward**: 4,000 XP. **Bonus:** 2,000 XP if the players solve the puzzle challenge in the first round.

Major Quest: Unlock the Cube
The PCs are rewarded for unlocking the Horreb Ritual Cube, granting them full access to the relic's power and ritual library. **Reward**: 4,000 XP

Minor Quest: Spare the Innocent
The heroes are rewarded for their quick reaction in saving the lives of the refugee caravan from Ilinvur. **Reward**: 800 XP

Adventure Synopsis

"Monument of the Ancients" begins in Phlan, a burgeoning city on the northern shore of the Moonsea. The PCs arrive late in the month of Tarsakh in the Year of Deep Water Drifting, 1480 DR, as the spring melt frees the port from Auril's icy grasp.

From there, the PCs travel to the untamed frontier of the Moonsea North. As they fight to drive back a crushing elemental incursion, the heroes explore the wild steppes of The Ride, trek across the unforgiving terrain of the Tortured Lands, and brave the deadly elements of the Frozen Forest.

Key Events

To aid your storytelling and keep the adventure moving forward, refer to the following timetable of key events.

Welcome to Phlan
As the PCs arrive in Phlan they are met at the wharf by the Lord Protector's trusted seneschal, Rolf. They have an appointment to dine with Lord Daoran later that evening, but Rolf first acquires accommodations for the PCs in one of Phlan's finest inns, then offers to give the heroes a tour of the city. It is during this period that the adventurers witness firsthand the refugee crisis gripping the city. That evening the heroes are escorted to Valjevo Castle to dine with Anivar Daoran, the ruling monarch of Phlan.

Roleplaying Encounter: Audience with the Lord Protector, page 65.

Journey North
The PCs agree to journey to Castle Vathar, a remote fortress in the north. Even mounted upon hippogriffs, the journey takes most of a day, so the PCs must awaken early to get a head start. Just as the sun begins to set behind the Dragonspine Mountains, the heroes arrive over Castle Vathar. In the distance, the heroes spot a merchant caravan being waylaid by horse nomads.

Tactical Encounter: Defend the Caravan, page 67.

Best of a Bad Situation
Listening to the horrible accounts of an elemental invasion recounted by the terrified merchants, the PCs have a clear decision to make. The settlements of The Ride under Phlan's protection have come under barbarian attack. Whitehorn and Verdigris have already fallen, but there may yet be time for the PCs to aid in the defense of Ilinvur.

Tactical Encounter: Civil Defense, page 69.

Following the encounter the heroes are approached by horse nomads under a sign of peace. A mystic among them describes the tale of Maram of the Great Spear and presents the PCs with a ritual cube.

Dark Days for Phlan
Hurrying back to Phlan, the heroes discover the city in lockdown. The gates to the old city are sealed tight and the Lord Protector has no interest in welcoming the heroes. Sneaking into the old city, the PCs head to Mantor's Library, where they gain the aid of Sage Opanrael in unlocking the secrets of the ritual cube.

Skill Challenge: All This Has Happened Before..., page 71.

From Bad to Worse
With the ritual sequence nearly complete, one final query remains unanswered: Where stands the Monument of the Ancients? As the heroes journey back to the north to seek council from the gnome's of Forharn, the mounting forces of elemental chaos cause the long dormant volcano Kossuth's Ire to erupt! Their only hope lies with the gnolls, so the PCs travel to the ruins of Flindyke. There, the characters explore the frozen ruins and encounter an ancient gnoll chieftain and his sycophantic minions.

Tactical Encounter: Lyceum of Rimefire, page 73.

Crucible of Chaos
Having obtained the location of the Monument of the Ancients, the PCs endure days of perilous trekking through frozen tundra beset by chaos tempests, elemental beasts, and bone-numbing temperatures.

Skill Challenge: Crucible of Chaos, page 75.

Monument of the Ancients
Crossing into the Frozen Forest, the heroes arrive at an ancient ziggurat of stone and iron: the Monument of the Ancients. As they approach, the characters are summoned within the structure to the Anchor of Chaos. There they must battle Pyricus, an elemental prince in service to the primordial Maram of the Great Spear, known to sages of the Realms as one of the "Seven Lost Gods."

Tactical Encounter: Anchor of Chaos, page 76.

Conclusion
The adventure culminates with the death of Pyricus and the sealing of the Anchor of Chaos. With the ritual cube in hand, the heroes can pass through the planar fissure anytime they choose, perhaps beginning a series of expeditions into the Elemental Chaos itself.

Preparing for Adventure

"Monument of the Ancients" takes the PCs north from the city of Phlan to the untamed frontier of the Moonsea North. As they fight to drive back a crushing elemental incursion, the PCs will explore the wild steppes of The Ride, trek across the unforgiving terrain of the Tortured Lands, and brave the deadly elements of the Frozen Forest.

What You Need to Play

This adventure requires all of the normal necessities of playing a Dungeons & Dragons adventure, such as the *Player's Handbook*®. As well, it is recommended that the Dungeon Master prepare himself with knowledge of the Moonsea region by reviewing pages 150–151 in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide*.

Treasure Preparation

"Monument of the Ancients" makes use of the parcel system of treasure rewards described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*®. The characters should accumulate eight parcels by the end of the adventure; more if you utilize optional encounters. You can use the list of parcels below, or you can create your own using the rules in Chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

If you're using the "wish list" suggestion in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, you can assign magic items based on those lists. Otherwise, select magic items from the *Player's Handbook* rulebooks or the *Adventurer's Vault*™ supplements appropriate for your characters and the adventure.

Treasure Parcels

Parcel A: _____, R1. Audience/Lord Protector
Parcel B: _____, M1. Defend the Caravan
Parcel C: Ritual cube, M2. Civil Defense
Parcel D: _____, S1. All This Has Happened Before
Parcel E: _____, M3. Lyceum of Rimefire
Parcel F: _____, S2. Crucible of Chaos
Parcel G: _____, M4. Anchor of Chaos
Parcel H: _____, P1. Sealing the Portal

Based on the guidelines in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, the following parcels can go in the spaces above. Rely on the wish lists your players gave you for half of the parcels.

Parcel 1: Magic item, level 17
Parcel 2: Magic item, level 16
Parcel 3: Magic item, level 15
Parcel 4: Magic item, level 14
Parcel 5: 5,500 gp; 5 opal cowrie shells worth 100 gp each, with a ravenar gemstone worth 1,000 gp set in each.
Parcel 6: 8,100 gp; an ornamental warhammer embossed with the symbol of Tyr (100 gp value), inset with eight Zendalure gemstones (1,000 gp each)
Parcel 7: A chest carved of fine amber containing a ritual scroll inscribed with Shadowwalk and 1,000 "electrum marks" (5 gp value each) minted in Impiltur.
Parcel 8: Horreb ritual cube, see page 61

Adventure Pacing

It's important that the DM instill in the players a sense of urgency while working to save the Moonsea North from the invasion of elemental forces. In a wilderness trek, players who don't feel the press of time may use their daily powers in the first encounter, then make camp for the night. Make it clear to them that advancing at such a measured pace may have dire story consequences.

If that isn't enough to keep the characters moving and preserving their daily powers for the big moments, then extra encounters during their extended rests might be. Making camp and setting a watch doesn't automatically end the day's encounters. If players make a habit of expending their daily powers in the day's first encounter, be sure to hit them with more unplanned encounters before they can complete an extended rest. Before long, they will learn the value in pacing themselves.

Welcome to Phlan

A sea vessel is the most common method of conveyance for PCs journeying to Phlan.

If the PCs arrive in Phlan at the port, read:

Stepping down off the gangplank onto a wide pier, you take in the sights and smells of the legendary city of Phlan. The many and divergent styles of architecture before you bespeak a city destroyed and rebuilt multiple times over its storied history. Towering well above the neighboring structures loom the turrets and pennons of Valjevo Castle, home to the city's ruling monarch Anivar Daoran, the Lord Protector.

Whispering a quick thanks to Valkur for a safe journey across the sea, you prepare to enter the city proper when you are approached by a smiling gentleman of middling years,

with the look of a lion about him despite his ornamental sword and fine attire.

"Behold the Jewel of the Moonsea, friend adventurers!" he begins with a great flourishing bow. "My name is Rolf, Seneschal to the Lord Protector, His Royal Majesty Anivar Daoran, and it is my most humble pleasure to welcome you the fair city of Phlan."

Rolf

Rolf is a male human of middle age. He is 5'8" tall and has a wise face. He is the seneschal to the noble court of Phlan. Like the generations of family before him, Rolf is one of the most loyal citizens of the city. Rolf is a good source for the heroes when they need information of any kind: where to find places of interest in the city, where to gain common information, where to go when adventuring. The DM should take care, however, to ensure that Rolf is not overused as a means of easy knowledge or to bypass necessary investigation and discovery. He is a fail-safe should the PCs encounter trouble figuring out what to do.

Tour of the City

Rolf explains to the characters that the Lord Protector is unavailable to meet with them at present. Instead, Lord Anivar requests the PCs join him for evening feast at Valjevo Castle.

In the meantime, Rolf is happy to escort the adventurers on a tour of the city, pointing out and answering questions about the city's notable landmarks (see page 54). Learning the layout of Phlan now may prove useful to the characters in the future, when they will need to sneak back into the city.

Audience with the Lord Protector

That evening, the heroes are escorted to Valjevo Castle to dine with Anivar Daoran, the ruling monarch of Phlan.

Roleplaying Encounter: Audience with the Lord Protector, page 65.

City of Phlan

The city of Phlan stands as a testament to the stubbornness of the humans who populate the Moonsea Reaches. Despite the city's current prosperity, the people of Phlan know all too well how quickly Beshaba can turn her fickle gaze upon the fortunate. The city has been ruined countless times over the centuries by war, invasions, and dragon strikes, only to be rebuilt each time. One need only dig in one's own cellar to unearth artifacts of a prior age, mundane or otherwise.

Today the city is thriving. With almost 20,000 permanent residents, Phlan is by far the largest and most prosperous settlement on the northern shore of the Moonsea. It is a pivotal crossroads for trade in and out of the Moonsea North.

Gems, rare ore, and other precious treasures flow into the city daily from vassal mining communities in the north. Until very recently, even the thick-bearded nomads of the frigid plains—the so-called Barbarians of the Ride—traded freely in the markets of Phlan, leading caravans burdened with silky furs, heavy wools, and precious ivories of beasts long forgotten in lands further south.

The city's oldest neighborhoods are built on Valjevo Isle, a large shoal swaddled by the Stojanow River delta. Fabled Valjevo Castle dominates the skyline and serves as a strong reminder of the city's resilience in the face of adversity. On the mainland, the burgeoning community has spread beyond the high walls of the Old City.

What the PCs Know

Between conversing with the seneschal and gossip picked up on the streets, the PCs learn quite a bit about the city of Phlan.

DC 25 Insight: Despite its outward appearance, there is something unsettling about the city. Despite the squalid living conditions of the refugees, very few speak out publicly. It could be that Rolf is here more to keep an eye on you than to roll out the welcome carpet.

DC 23 Perception: The citizens of Phlan are very deferential toward the city watch and officials. Though you witness no incidents of oppression or abuse, you can see that they tolerate their leaders more than respect them.

DC 18 History: Early in the last century, Phlan was ruled by a city council. That changed in the Year of the Blazing Hand (1380 DR) when Zhentarim Hatemaster, Cvaal Daoran, dissolved the Council of Ten and established himself as Lord Protector of Phlan.

DC 25 Streewise: Rumor has it that Lord Caleb Randol of Kovel Mansion has commissioned the Vilhon Mercenary Corps to undermine Black Fist operations in the north. It's an open secret that Lord Randol longs to see council rule restored in the city.

DC 20 Religion: Despite a prominent temple of Bane within the old city, the banite priests of Phlan keep a low profile, preferring not to evangelize openly. Word among religious circles says that this unorthodox branch of the faith is wholly divorced from the mainstream church, which is headquartered in Mulmaster.

City of Phlan
Year of Deep Water Drifting 1480 DR
Quivering Forest
Stojanow Trail
Dusk Landville's farm
Parhim Schend's farm
Torac Scheiner's farm
Anton Eberhard's farm
Christoph Picone's farm
Stojanow River
Phlan Path
Torath's March
Distance in Feet
0
500
Valhingen Graveyard
Valhingen Way
Iron Route
A. Valjevo Castle
B. Stojanow Gate
C. Lyceum of the Black Lord (temple of Bane)
D. Podol Plaza
E. Cadorna Textiles (merchant compound)
F. Mantor's Library
G. Cracked Crown (inn)
H. Kuto's Well
I. Nat Wyler's Bell (inn)
J. Denlor's Tower (mage tower)
K. Laughing Goblin (tavern)
L. Sokol Keep (merchant compound)
M. Kovel Mansion (noble estate)
N. House Jannarsk (merchant compound)
O. Red Plumes (Mercenary HQ)
P. Brice Vang (armorer)
Q. Randolph Tzintin (leather clothier)
R. Vondor Thond (carpenter)
S. Alero the Smithy (weaponsmith)
T. The Velvet Doublet (festhall)
U. Castle Atuke
Podol Street
The Mezzanine
Steel Avenue
Lamp Street
Oath Street
Huldane Way
Thorn Island
Bay of Phlan
The Moonsea
N
W
E
S
SCM

Phlan

Phlan is an ancient city-state situated at the mouth of the Stojanow River along the northern shore of the Moonsea. The city is famous for having been constantly rebuilt in the face of repeated attacks. Today, the city is enjoying a period of growth and prosperity, fueling bards to dub the port city "the jewel of the Moonsea."

Population: 20,000, plus an additional 3,000 or so who work farms or live in small homesteads in the surrounding region. Most are humans and dwarves, although sizable populations of halflings also reside here.

Government: Anivar Daoran is monarch and Lord Protector of Phlan as well as governor of the vassal communities of Whitehorn, Verdigris, and Ilinvur. Anivar is a weak sovereign, however, leaving much of the daily governance of the city to a confederation of merchant families, including houses Sokol, Jannarsk, Cadorna, and Bivaunt.

Defenses: The Black Watch, a militia of 900 trained fighters, is the city's primary police force. The Watch is one branch of a greater organization, the Knights of the Black Fist. The Knights report directly to the Lord Protector and deal primarily with external threats to the city. Phlan's harbor shelters a small flotilla of warships to discourage pirate activity in the region.

Inns and Taverns: Laughing Goblin (inn), Cracked Crown (inn), Bitter Blade (inn), Nat Wyler's Bell (tavern). The Velvet Doublet (festhall) caters to wealthy patrons with exotic appetites.

Supplies: Brice Vang (armorer), Randolph Tzintin (leather clothier), Vondor Thond (carpenter), Alero the Smithy (weaponsmith). The Red Plumes mercenary company maintains a barracks and training hall in the city.

Temples: Lyceum of the Black Lord (temple of Bane). Smaller shrines venerate Umberlee, Auril, and Amaunator. Worshipers of Shar are actively persecuted within the city.

Notable Landmarks

Some of these locations include minor quests that the PCs can acquire. Use these as extra adventure hooks, rewards for befriending townsfolk, or ways to expand the story of your campaign.

Valjevo Castle

Citizens speak of Valjevo Castle with great civic pride. Standing several stories tall, with majestic marble and granite walls and awe-inspiring turrets soaring one-hundred feet or more, Valjevo Castle is unquestionably the largest and most palatial edifice in all the Moonsea.

Milsor the Valjevo commissioned the palace after reestablishing the city in the Year of the Lost Lance (712 DR). Construction on the palace was completed in the Year of the Jovial Mage (730 DR), during the final year of his reign. Despite many misfortunes befalling the city over the intervening centuries, Valjevo Castle has remained standing, an enduring symbol of Phlan's resilience in the face of adversity.

Today the palace is home to the city's ruling dynasty, House Daoran. Anivar Daoran, Lord Protector of Phlan, rules from the Cinnabar Throne in the castle's Great Hall.

Stojanow Gate

Bard's tales claim that fire giants constructed Stojanow Gate in tribute to the warrior kings of old. Older, less fanciful accounts point to ancient dwarven craftsmanship. Whatever the truth is behind the structure, its architecture is awesome to behold, with likenesses of civic heroes, dragons, and even gods adorning its walls.

The vaulted monument stands nearly 60 feet high, with 30-foot-thick walls stretching over 100 feet between the two channels of the Stajanow River. The vaulted arch is secured by two sets of massive, iron-bound doors which seal the gate. Both are left open except in times of war.

Lyceum of the Black Lord

The largest and most prominent temple in Phlan is the Lyceum of the Black Lord, which serves the faithful of Bane. Unlike the tyrannical and caustic dogma espoused by the mainstream Church of Bane headquartered in Mulmaster, the priests of Phlan preach a moderate doctrine of meticulous self-discipline and simple vassalage to the city's lords.

Valhingen Graveyard

This large cemetery stands outside of the city proper, along the western spur of the Stojanow River delta. Iron gates along the west and east walls permit entry to what appears at first glance to be a sprawling city park. Thick stands of blueleafs wave their brightly colored branches above tangles of witchgrass that grow tall over gravestones. Violet bougainvillea and other thorny vines grow unimpeded over the handful of mausoleums interspersed here and there within the confines of Valhingen's high walls.

Despite rumors of past incidents with undead, no unholy pall hangs over Valhigen Graveyard today. Acolytes in service to Kelemvor tend the grounds and perform interment services for the dead.

One of the more prominent crypts serves as the eternal resting place for the legendary paladin Miltiades. Carved upon the granite doorway to the tomb are the scales of justice, the archaic symbol of Tyr.

Nobles' Quarter
The Nobles' Quarter is far cleaner than other parts of the city. Attendants can be seen at all hours of the day sweeping and maintaining the smooth cobblestone roads. The most storied and opulent of the district's fine homes is assuredly Kovel Mansion. This architectural beauty was constructed centuries ago of rare, fossilized "Rowewood," ensuring the structure's longevity. The estate is guarded at all hours by well-dressed and well-armed sentinels patrolling the grounds.

Podol Plaza
This large, open-air market draws large crowds with its plentiful selection of goods from the length and breadth of Faerûn. Here young children sell broadsheets of thin parchment with the news of the day for a copper each.

Scholar's Square
This area of town is the center of learning in Phlan. Mantor's Library is the most significant landmark, though trade schools, wizard academies, sage houses, and other structures of learning can be found here.

Kuto's Well
Kuto's Well, as its name implies, is a nondescript well drawing water from an ancient cistern beneath the city. If someone climbs down the well, a successful passive Perception check (DC 29) reveals a secret wall about halfway down the shaft. This is one of many concealed entrances to the notorious catacombs of Phlan, peopled with cutthroats, drug addicts, and other dregs of society.

Thorn Island
A sandy, wind-buffeted islet resting offshore in the Bay of Phlan, Thorn Island serves as a natural breakwater against the ravages of the Moonsea. The isle's most prominent feature is Sokol Keep, fortress and headquarters of the formidable Sokol merchant house. House Sokol's commercial holdings throughout the city are second only to the ruling Daoran's. A beacon atop the highest tower of the Keep serves as a lighthouse for ships entering the Bay of Phlan. A ferry to the city's Dock District runs every hour from a small quay on the isle's eastern extent.

Cracked Crown
If the characters request lodging, Rolf arranges for them to receive accommodations at the city's finest inn, the Cracked Crown, at no cost.

Because this is a high-end establishment in a quiet section of town, the Watch generally responds quickly and in force to disturbances there. However, because the inn attracts a wealthy clientele, it also makes a tempting target for cutpurses and second-story men.

Knights of the Black Fist

Formed a century past, the Brothers of the Black Fist (as they were known at that time) were a tyrannical order of blackguards affiliated with the Church of Xvim. In the Year of Risen Elfkin (1375 DR), Zhentilar forces under the command of Hatemaster Cvaal Daoran marched upon Phlan and seized the city. Thereafter the order became the *de facto* armed forces of the city. The citizens of Phlan warmed considerably toward the order after the "Knights" aided Phlan in repelling a Netherese invasion.

Today the order is only loosely affiliated with the Church of Bane. It pays a nominal tribute annually to church leadership in Mulmaster.

Journey North

In order to speed the heroes' journey north, the Lord Protector offers them the use of his prized hippogriff steeds. Each character gains a Vanguard Hippogriff Dreadmount as a mount for the duration of the adventure (or until the creature is slain).

Moonsea North
Large City
City
Village
Ruins
Fortress
Fortress, Ruined
Lugotak Sea
(Secret Sea)
Titan Peaks
Heridfel
Shattersoul River
River Pelanvir
The Great Glacier
Cinbar's Climb
Frozen Flindyke
Way of the Powrie
Remnar Hills
West Galena Mnts.
Fallen Kingdom of Barze
(Circa -456 DR to -351 DR)
Vercy Wood
Falls of Ixce
Ilinvur
Ilinvur Trail
Hawksroost
Glister
West Galena Mnts.
Northlodge Path
Bloodskull Keep
Thar
Valley of the Falls
Bloodmuck
Tormel River
Melvaunt
Moonwatch Hills
Twilight Marsh
Vanishing Hills
Citadel Ankhalus
Trank R.
Nasul Creek
Glumpen Swamp
Toranth's March
Quivering Forest
Stojanow Rvr.
Philan
The Moonsea
Umberlee's Talons
Castle Vathar
Lake Longreach
Telstang Brook
The Grass Sea
Stormy Bay
Iron Route
Lone Tower
Giant's Cairn
Zhentil Keep
Razaek's Tears
Verdigris
Glacier of the Silver Blades
Tickleberry Hills
Forharn
Kossuth's Ire
Tortured Lands
(The Leewai)
Dragonspine Mnts.
Dragons' Claw Portal
The Ride
Tesh Trail
River Tesh
House of Gold
Turnback Mountain
Oubliette of Madness
White Peaks
Amaratha Stream
Lake Maltorus
Stoneshoulder Creek
Citadel of the Raven
Mnt Launt
The Skondarr
Teshwave
Mount Ombaddor
Mount Tesh
Mount Horgrymborr
Whitehorn
Cenotaph of the Lost Gods
Regek's Span
Whitehorn
Camnod's Cairn
Frozen Forest
Alaphaer Run
Monument of the Ancients
Abbey Mountains
Mount Akoro
Myth Ondath
Crescentflow
River Zef
Snowmantle
Rystall Wood
(Border Forest)
N
E
S
W
Distance in Miles
0
100

Vanguard Hippogriff Dreadmount Level 10 Soldier
Large natural beast (mount)
Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +12
HP 109; **Bloodied** 54
AC 26; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22
Speed 4, fly 10, overland flight 12

⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+15 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage.

↯ **Wing Slam** (immediate interrupt, when an adjacent enemy shifts or moves into a nonadjacent square; at-will)
+13 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is knocked prone. The dreadmount cannot use this power while flying.

Sturdy Mount (while mounted by a friendly rider of 10th level or higher; at-will) ✦ **Mount**
When an attack forces the dreadmount to move, it moves 1 less square than the attack specifies. When an attack would knock it or its rider prone, the dreadmount can roll an immediate saving throw to prevent it or its rider from falling prone.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 24 (+12) **Dex** 20 (+10) **Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 21 (+10) **Int** 5 (+2) **Cha** 9 (+4)

Ector Brahms

This stoic, coarse individual is a high-ranking officer in the Knights of the Black Fist. As a longtime advisor to the Lord Protector, Ector spends most of his days in Castle Valjevo issuing orders and planning troop movements. Though he would never let on, he is eager to escape the doldrums of castle life to join the heroes on their expedition north.

Ector has been ordered to join the PCs on their flight to Castle Vathar, but if they would have him, the Knight Commander would gladly remain with them throughout the duration of the adventure. Ector makes a great supporting character for a party missing a leader (or needing an extra healer). See *Dungeon Master's Guide 2* for rules on supporting characters.

Otherwise, he will stay behind upon reaching Castle Vathar to command the evacuation effort in the north.

Ector Brahms, Knight Commander Level 13 Leader
Medium natural humanoid, human
Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +9
HP 82; **Bloodied** 41; **Healing Surges** 13
AC 28; **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 27
Speed 5

⊕ **Halberd** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +19 vs. AC; 1d10 + 10 damage, and Ector and one ally adjacent to him gain a +1 power bonus to AC until the end of Ector's next turn.

↯ **Warlord's Favor** (standard, encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +19 vs. AC; 2d10 + 10 damage, and one ally within 5 squares gains a +3 power bonus to attack rolls against the target until the end of your next turn.

↯ **Bolstering Blow** (standard, encounter) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +19 vs. AC; 3d10 + 10 damage, and one ally within 5 squares gains 10 temporary hit points.

Inspiring Word (minor; twice per encounter) ✦ **Healing**
Close burst 5; Ector or one ally in the burst spends a healing surge.

Mounted Combat
Ector is considered to have the mounted combat feat for purposes of commanding his hippogriff mount.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** *Common*
Skills Athletics +15, Intimidate +11
Str 18 (+10) **Dex** 10 (+6) **Wis** 12 (+7)
Con 10 (+6) **Int** 14 (+8) **Cha** 11 (+6)
Equipment halberd, scale armor

Steer Clear of the Forest

Mounted on hippogriffs, it takes the party roughly 11 hours to cover the 65 miles between Phlan and Castle Vathar. Observant PCs (Perception DC 15) note that their flight path never crosses over the Quivering Forest. Every two-and-a-half hours the Knight Commander signals for the party to land, to give the mounts a rest and allow the PCs to stretch their legs. Despite the many threats known to stalk the western frontier of Thar, the Knight Commander seems more preoccupied with the shadowy forest to the west.

If the heroes ask the Knight Commander about the Quivering Forest, read Journal Entry 19, page 81.

If the PCs intentionally enter the woods, the DM may consider the following optional encounter:

Fey Sentinels (Level 14 Optional Encounter, XP 5,000): Many denizens of the Feywild are found throughout this ancient wood.

- ✦ 1 centaur mystic (level 13 controller, *MM2*)
- ✦ 2 centaur ravagers (level 12 brute, *MM2*)
- ✦ 2 centaur hunters (level 12 artillery, *MM2*)

Overland Travel

Over the course of the adventure, the characters will be expected to cover vast distances with haste. Players and DMs may wish to review the Exploration section of Chapter 8 in the *Player's Handbook*, page 260.

Rituals such as Shadow Walk (Level 12 Ritual, *Player's Handbook*, page 312) and Traveler's Chant (Level 1 Ritual, *Player's Handbook 2*, page 217) can certainly come in handy in situations like this.

Travel Distances, Overland

Point A	Point B	Distance
Phlan	Zhentil Keep	70 miles
Phlan	Melvaunt	55 miles
Phlan	Castle Vathar	65 miles
Castle Vathar	Ilinvur	100 miles
Castle Vathar	Verdigris	50 miles
Verdigris	Whitehorn	110 miles
Ilinvur	Flindyke	120 miles
Flindyke	Alaphaer Run	175 miles
Alaphaer Run	Monument of the Ancients	85 miles

Castle Vathar

This massive, ancient structure is the summation of centuries of upgrades, rebuilds, and improvements. Being one of the more magnificent fortresses in the region, Castle Vathar has been built to last the test of time. When a massive blizzard pelted the region in 1409 DR, Castle Vathar was able to house most of the refugees from the surrounding regions and keep them in good care until the weather cleared. Castle Vathar has had several famous units garrisoned within its walls over its lifetime, including the Knights of the North, a famed adventuring company from the past century.

When the PCs arrive at Castle Vathar, read:

Just as Castle Vathar's dusky walls come into view, the distinctive metallic roar of a glaur horn echoes upon the canyon walls. Scant moments later, a more distant horn repeats the clarion call.

The Knight-Commander's otherwise cheerful visage suddenly turns hard and purposeful. Lowering his helm, he signals toward the looming citadel before urging his hippogriff to accelerate. Your own well-trained mount lurches into action, climbing swiftly in pursuit.

As the PCs approach the fortress, it is clear that a distressed caravan is careening toward the safety of the fortress. What is also clear is that a force is chasing closely after them on horseback, weapons drawn, giving the caravan little chance at survival.

Any character that successfully makes a DC 25 Arcana (or DC 30 History) check can identify the horseback marauders as the Vaegould tribe of the Barbarians of the Ride.

The PCs are likely to rush into the fray once they realize the caravan of refugees is trying to reach the safety of Castle Vathar. Time is not on their side, and players should feel urgency if they're going to succeed. When they engage, the heroes are free to use the hippogriffs provided but do not retain any of the mount's special abilities unless they possess the Mounted Combat feat (*Player's Handbook*, page 199).

Tactical Encounter: Defend the Caravan, page 67.

Aftermath

Once the barbarian threat is averted, the heroes and any surviving caravan passengers are escorted into Castle Vathar to meet with the castellan.

The characters are free to fulfill the bounty put forth by the Lord Protector; however, it may affect their alignment to do so. The DM is encouraged to explain the horrific nature of such an act and the implications thereof.

Best of a Bad Situation

At this point, the PCs are fully aware of the horrors that have befallen the mining community of Ilinvur. With no time to spare, the PCs should prepare for their journey to the remote outpost.

Despite the pleas of the merchants, the PCs and their weary mounts must wait out the evening in Castle Vathar. In the morning the PCs fly out, hoping they are not too late.

Ilinvur

Ilinvur is a small mining outpost far to the north beyond The Ride. The community is managed by two leaders, one for the defense of the outpost and the other for administrative duties. Though small, a lot of exotic traders can be found here, as it is their last major stopping point before heading off into the truly unknown.

Incursion of Elemental Evil

As the heroes approach Ilinvur, they can see smoke still rising from the ruins of several buildings. There is no sign of life, and all appears quiet save for the cold wind—a common trait of the region. Upon closer inspection, they can see several elementals rummaging through the area.

Tactical Encounter: Civil Defense, page 69.

Ilinvur

This lonely mining outpost under the protection of Phlan serves as a refuge for miners, prospectors, and folk too foolhardy to live elsewhere. In recent years, Ilinvur has enjoyed increasing trade with neighboring Vaasa, though most folk here still distrust the Warlock Knights of that land.

Population: Approximately 250. Ilinvur consists mostly of humans but also contains several dozen dwarves and even a family of gnomes.

Government: Diarchy. Ilinvur has two leaders with equal power who manage the defense and administration of this mining community.

Defenses: There is no formal military, but each member of the community is expected to form a temporary militia when required for the town's defense.

Inns and Taverns: There is only a single inn within this community, and it also serves as the only tavern. The Pick is a homely establishment that most visitors enter at some point in their stay.

Supplies: The best shops and stalls are located in the town's square. Though originally created for temporary purposes, this location has become popular for merchants and adventurers who are trying to hock their recently-acquired treasures.

Temples: Though no large temples exist in this frontier settlement, shrines exist to Bane, Gond, Tempus, and Selûne.

Aftermath

Horselords on the outskirts of town peacefully reveal themselves as the Varm, a tribe more aligned with the balance of the land. They rebuke the beliefs of the Vaegould and urge the PCs to challenge Maram's return.

The PCs are offered the Major Quest—Seal the Anchor of Chaos: 4,000 XP.

To aid the heroes in their task, the shaman presents them with a Horreb ritual cube (page 61). She explains that this item has been handed down through generations of shamans in her tribe. She doesn't understand its secrets, but she knows that it was created as a safeguard against the time when Maram would try to reenter the world. Because that event seems imminent, she implores them to unlock its secret magic, that they might use its power to save these lands.

An insightful player may suggest that the characters return to Phlan to report this news to the Lord Protector. Afterward, they might take the ritual cube to Mantor's Library to research the ancient relic.

On their return trip to Phlan, the PCs notice an increasing number of elemental patrols in the region. DMs may wish to introduce an optional wilderness encounter along the PCs' path.

Dark Days for Phlan

With the shaman's words weighing heavily on their thoughts, the characters hurry back to Phlan to report their findings to the Lord Protector. Arriving at the city, the PCs are aghast to learn the city has been completely locked down. By order of the Lord Protector, the city gates have been sealed, and no one (the heroes included) is admitted into the old city. Worse still are squads of Black Fist Knights patrolling the boulevards of the new city, rounding up refugee squatters and harassing honest citizens alike.

Gaining Entrance

The heroes should realize that they have little hope of unlocking the secrets of the puzzle cube without access to Mantor's Library, which sits securely behind the high walls of the old city.

- Brute force is one tactic the characters might consider, but no matter how powerful they believe themselves to be, they'll not last long against the marshaled forces of the Knights of the Black Fist.

- Bribing the Black Watch guardsmen defending the gates is the easiest way to get past. This is not a cheap proposition, however, requiring a total bribe of 1,000 gp (100 gp to each guardsman).

- Sneaking into the city via the catacombs is a cheaper, though less elegant, solution. The entrances to the catacombs include a sewer grate under the Bay of Phlan, a crypt within Valhingen Graveyard, and a hidden passage leading from the Velvet Doublet festhall. Once inside, the PCs can exit the catacombs at Kuto's Well.

Unlocking the Past

Once inside the old city, the PCs are free to seek out Mantor's Library in Scholars Square. There, they can further research Maram of the Great Spear and learn more of the alliance that thwarted the primordial centuries past.

Opanrael the Sage

As Master Librarian and Head Curator at Mantor's Library, Opanrael the Sage is knowledgeable about a great many subjects, though he is especially astute in the field of world religion and its history.

When the characters inquire about the Horreb ritual cube at Mantor's Library, read:

Recognizing at once the significance of the ancient relic, the Master Librarian shuffles you quickly into his private study.

"What you hold there, my friends," the old sage begins, his typically cold eyes now alight with keen interest, "is a Horreb cube. Only a dozen, more or less, are thought to have survived the fall of that once great civilization."

Opanrael goes on to describe the basic purpose of the artifact as an implement for storing and invoking rituals.

Barbarians of the Ride

Also known as the Horse Nomads of the Golden Steppes, these primitive plains dwellers consist of many independent tribes, each with distinct customs and governed by feuding war-chieftains.

The Vaegould: One of the more aggressive tribes of the Ride, Vaegould tradition demands young warriors perform the "ritual of bloodfire" before they are accepted as full members of the tribe. The bloodthirsty "gods" worshiped by the Vaegould are in fact elemental princes or aspects of ancient primordials. The imminent return of Maram of the Great Spear has brought this tribe out of the remote wilderness to harry the more civilized settlements of The Ride under the protection of Phlan.

The Varm: Unlike the Vaegould, the Varm practice totem magic and venerate primal spirits. They are also a more contemplative tribe, eschewing war for peaceful coexistence with their neighbors. Centuries ago, the Varm joined in the alliance to drive Maram of the Great Spear from these lands.

When the heroes mention Maram of the Great Spear from the account of the Varm shaman, read:

"Maram of the Great Spear!" the startled Opanrael exclaims in a high whisper.

"Though that name is unknown to most living today, in centuries past its very mention would bring about an involuntary shudder and a momentary vision of unconscionable acts of violence and brutality. Maram is one of the Seven Lost Gods—a misnomer, of course, as he was in fact no god at all, but a prince of elemental evil, a primordial scion of the Elemental Chaos. The primitive tribes of the Moonsea North, human or otherwise, venerated the Lost Seven. In exchange, their debased sorcerers and shamans were granted power of raw elemental fury.

"In the end, Maram was driven back to the Inner Planes, locked away from the mortal world by a powerful Imaskari ritual known as Divine Barrier."

Further research on Maram (History DC 20) reveals more clues. Read Journal Entry 2 and Entry 5, page 79.

Solving the Puzzle Cube

With the fable recounted by the Varm shaman and the additional clues provided by Opanrael the Sage, the PCs can scour the city for clues on the purpose and operation of the Horreb ritual cube. Only by unlocking its mysteries will the characters learn that the artifact they are carrying offers a clue to the crafting of a powerful ritual used to bind elemental creatures.

Skill Challenge: All This Has Happened Before..., page 28.

At the conclusion of the skill challenge, read:

As you put the correct pieces into place, you notice one side of the cube beginning to glow. While the remaining five sides remain dormant and cold, this one grows warm and luminous.

Horreb Ritual Cube **Level 18**

Arcane glyphs of unknown origin are etched upon the face of this intricate, mechanical puzzle cube.

Wondrous Item priceless

Property: Gain a +2 item bonus to saving throws.

Power (Consumable): Standard Action. By rotating the cube's faces into the proper arrangement and making a DC 23 Arcana or Religion skill check, the holder of the cube triggers the ritual stored in it during the cube's creation.

Horreb Ritual Cube

A Horreb ritual cube can have a ritual stored inside it during the cube's creation, and that ritual can later be released as a standard action. Physically, the cube is approximately 3 inches on a side, composed of smaller, interlocking cubes about 1 inch on a side (thus, each of the cube's six faces is composed of nine smaller cubes in a three-by-three square, showing 54 faces in total). Each face is marked with a unique glyph. The sides can be rotated individually in such a way that the smaller cubes are maneuvered across it, and the entire cube can be arranged in a bewildering number of ways. This mechanism serves as a lock to prevent anyone from releasing the ritual prematurely or unwisely. The ritual can be released only when the cube's faces are placed in a specific arrangement.

This particular cube contains a ritual that was created for one purpose only: to keep Maram of the Great Spear locked in his prison. It is a failsafe against anything ever allowing him to re-enter the mortal realm. With the faces in the proper arrangement, the characters holding the cube can trigger the stored ritual as a standard action with a DC 23 Arcana or Religion skill check and reseal the gates of Maram's prison (see page 71).

From Bad to Worse

With the ritual sequence nearly complete, one final query remains unanswered: Where stands the Monument of the Ancients? To answer that question, the sage Opanrael suggests one of two courses of action: Speak with the reclusive gnomes of Forharn in their hidden city lying somewhere in the lightless depths under the volcano Kossuth's Ire, or brave the wilds of the Tortured Lands to attempt parlay with the demonic gnolls of Frozen Flindyke. Both factions once comprised the alliance to thwart Maram, and there exists the possibility that someone among them knows the location of the ancient monument.

Once again, the heroes gear up for another grueling journey into the Moonsea North.

Kossuth's Ire

Independent of the characters' wishes, fate ultimately intervenes and takes the decision away from them.

As the PCs cross into The Ride on their journey north, read:

Despite having been gone from The Ride for less than a tenday, the influence of malign elemental forces at play in the region is unmistakable. Where only days before had stretched mile upon mile of rolling fields of golden savannah, now lays a barren wasteland of dry scrub and cracked earth.

Aloft on your hippogriffs, you see smoke rising from the caldera of Kossuth's Ire a mere 10 miles away. As you watch, the mountain erupts in a massive plume of lava and ash. The shockwave nearly tumbles you from your saddle, and the smoke and ash roiling past chokes your lungs and burns your eyes and exposed flesh.

The hippogriffs wheel and plunge away from the blast, reaching relative safety beneath the cloud. The city of Forharn, hidden beneath the volcano, is hopelessly cut off from you, if it survived at all.

Being less than an hour's flight north of Castle Vathar at the time of the eruption, the PCs may seek refuge at the castle before deciding on their next course of action. With the hidden city of Forharn either obliterated by the eruption or cut off by lava-filled tunnels, the characters have no other choice than to seek council from the gnolls of Frozen Flindyke.

The Tortured Lands

The Tortured Lands are largely unknown to the civilized folk of the Realms. The western reaches are rocky and parched, with deep canyons gouging the landscape. In the east, the earth turns brittle and cold, dunes of frozen sand rising in weird, broken shapes. The region's unforgiving landscape and severe temperature swings make the Tortured Lands uninhabitable to most.

Heroes researching the region in Mantor's Library come across a curious passage. Read Journal Entry 3, page 79.

Frozen Flindyke

With their hope attached to a tribe of bloodthirsty gnolls, the PCs need to tread with care as they enter the ancient gnolls' den.

As the characters near the Lyceum of Rimefire, read:

A dull roar of chanting can be heard echoing throughout the deep river chasm. Though the words are foreign and muffled, it's clear that a prayer is being recited.

Tactical Encounter: Lyceum of Rimefire, page 73.

With map in hand, the PCs depart Frozen Flindyke heading north, thus beginning the final leg of their journey toward the Monument of the Ancients.

The Fate of Forharn

The gnome city is far below the volcano proper and is not damaged by the eruption, although it is cut off from the surface—temporarily. The Hammers of Flandal, a ruling council composed of senior miners, master smiths, and the Arandhammer, will likely wait for several months before sending expeditions beyond their warded catacombs to assess the extent of the damage.

Also surviving the eruption, a fact that would greatly alarm the human miners of Whitehorn, are two dragons raised from birth by the city's priests—the adult red Rauklarnemis and the elder blue Trakaulorr.

Crucible of Chaos

The further north one travels from Flindyke, the more rugged, perilous, and inhospitable the wilderness becomes. Even with mounts and/or rituals to speed their way, the cross-country trek toward the Monument of the Ancients will be long and perilous. While the heroes are braving the elements, run them through the Crucible of Chaos skill challenge.

Skill Challenge: Crucible of Chaos, page 75.

Wilderness Encounters

You may increase the difficulty of the heroes' wilderness trek by introducing the following optional encounters along their path.

Archon Patrol (Level 14 Optional Encounter, XP 5,200)

The foothills of the Abbey Mountains are swarming with archons and their elemental servitors.

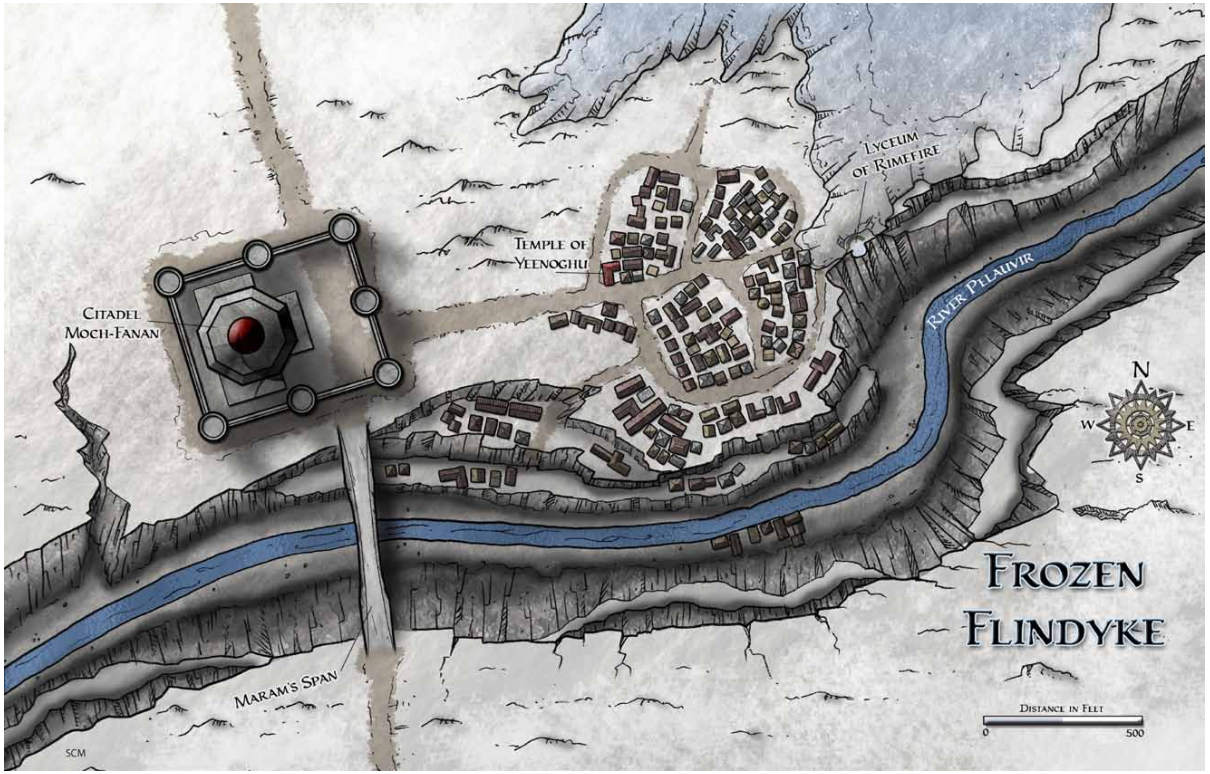
- ✦ 3 ice archon hailscourges (level 16 artillery, **MM**)
- ✦ 1 chillfire destroyer (level 14 brute, page 70)

Avalanche! (Level 14 Optional Encounter, XP 5,000)

Crossing the unforgiving tundra of the Moonsea North, the characters disturb a slumbering frost titan.

- ✦ 1 frost titan avalanche (level 14 solo brute, DRAGON #377*)

**D&D Insider subscribers may view the full statistics for this creature in the D&D Compendium or D&D Monster Builder.*



Timeline

The following timeline provides a rough guide for the PCs' journey. It assumes that the heroes are on horseback. If they tarry or take shortcuts, adjust the timetable accordingly.

Day 1: Following the Remorhaz Ride

The icy path leading north from Frozen Flindyke barely qualifies as a road. A few gnoll caravans struggle through these icy lands, hauling 40 to 60 ore-laden sledges from Ghaethlauntar to Flindyke. Few humans have seen Mount Ghaethlauntar and lived. Then again, few today want to see it.

Day 2: Into the Open Tundra

As the Remorhaz Ride curves north along the Great Glacier, the heroes need to abandon the road for the open tundra. Aiming for the distant foothills north of Turnback Mountain, the PCs feel alone and exposed on the chaos-marked expanse.

In centuries past, the open tundra between Flindyke and the Frozen Forest was territory claimed by the gnolls. In the decades following the Spellplague, a new menace began encroaching on the gnolls' ancestral lands—marauding remorhaz, themselves driven from the Great Glacier by even greater threats.

Days 3-5: The Abbey Mountains
Passing among the northern foothills of the Abbey Mountains, known locally as the "mammothbacks," the characters now set their course south, on line with Selûne's Crest, the highest peak of the range.

Millennia ago, the ancient Netherese worshipers of Selûne constructed the Abbey of the Moon upon its grand alpine summit. Today only a few stone markers and toppled columns remain from this once magnificent edifice.

Days 6-7: Navigating the Alaphaer Run
Finally, the heroes come upon the Alaphaer Run, a swift torrent flowing under 10 inches or more of packed ice. The river is free from pollutants and safe to drink. But as the water is impossibly cold, anyone breaking through the ice suffers 15 cold damage per turn, and 15 ongoing cold damage (save ends) after climbing out of the water. Blessed by Auril herself (Alaphaer being an archaic name for the Frostmaiden), the river actually travels in and out of her Astral realm in the Deep Wilds as it winds north toward the Frozen Forest.

Day 8: The Frozen Forest
The Frozen Forest is a foreboding, boreal woodland; its thick conifers are sheathed in glittering ice. Malevolent fey creatures abound in this arctic hinterland swathed in perpetual twilight.

After nearly a tenday of trekking through impossible conditions, the PCs break through the dense trees into a wide clearing. Dominating the glade before them rises a colossal step pyramid—the Monument of the Ancients.

Monument of the Ancients

The Monument of the Ancients is a magnificent sight. Constructed entirely of stone and metals never before seen and exotic even to the Elemental Chaos, this broad ziggurat extends high above the ancient, frozen trees of the region, hinting at an ancient society indigenous to the area.

Anchor of Chaos

Deep within the Monument of the Ancients lies an ancient antechamber that contains another, smaller (but still massive) pyramid. Each of its four sides has ornate, portal-like structures that contain the properties of the four major elements; fire, water, air, and earth. Centered on the very top resides a horrorific creature seemingly anchored to the earth, orchestrating some form of corruption as if it were a symphony for its masters to witness.

When the characters arrive, read:

Seemingly hidden from the world beyond, you find a massive ziggurat of mystifying glory deep within the frozen trees of this unexplored land. Your stomach tightens from the sharp smell of sulfur in the air. Moments later, your vision spins as you are summoned elsewhere… .

Tactical Encounter: Anchor of Chaos, page 76.

Conclusion

After the defeat of the Herald of Maram and the sealing off of the planar fissure to the Elemental Chaos, the PCs still face a long and arduous trek back to Phlan. Even by the most direct route it's nearly 200 miles to Ilinvur and another hundred back to Phlan.

Pyricus, the Herald of Maram

Where Do We Go From Here?

Defeating Pyricus ends the threat to the Moonsea North for now. Of course, insightful characters know that Maram's designs on the region are far from finished. Proactive adventurers may propose taking the fight to Maram. With the Horreb ritual cube in their possession, the heroes can reopen the planar fissure any time they please, allowing passage into the Elemental Chaos.

R1: Audience with the Lord Protector

Roleplaying Encounter

The characters are not granted an audience with the Lord Protector immediately upon their arrival. Lord Daoran has asked for the heroes to join him at supper later that evening.

Anivar is a paranoid ruler. In the hours before supper, he sends his spies and informants to collect information on the heroes, gauging where their loyalties lie and ascertaining any threat they may present to the Lord Protector himself.

As the time for the dinner engagement draws near, the PCs are escorted by Rolf to Valjevo Castle with a retinue of black-armored knights following in step.

As the characters enter the grand dining hall of Valjevo Castle, read:

The dining hall stretches on for what seems like hundreds of feet. The centerpiece of the chamber is the opulent dining table itself, crafted of rare and precious Morcant Burl, a purple-hued hardwood which grows only in the nearby Quivering Forest. As you take your seats, ready to enjoy a hearty banquet of gourmet cuisine, the chamberlain announces the arrival of the Lord Protector, Anivar Daoran.

Anivar Daoran

Unlike the warrior-kings who sat on the Cinnabar Throne before him, Anivar Daoran is ill-suited to rule. He is a far cry from his illustrious grandfather, Cvaal Daoran, who single handedly slew a shade prince during the Shadowbane War of 1383 DR. Anivar is a dainty, pampered, cowardly noble with a bare modicum of wit and intelligence.

Privately, Anivar despises the responsibilities of rule and cares little for his subjects. His call for heroes was a political maneuver to satiate the rabble. If the adventurers die in the north, so much the better. He will use the heroes' failure as an excuse to consolidate power and to rid his city of refugees by conscripting them and throwing them at the barbarians en masse.

Developments

In addition to the Lord Protector and his personal guard, the characters are joined by Knight Commander Ector Brahms of the Knights of the Black Fist, Opanrael the Sage of Mantor's Library, and the Lord's Seneschal Rolf.

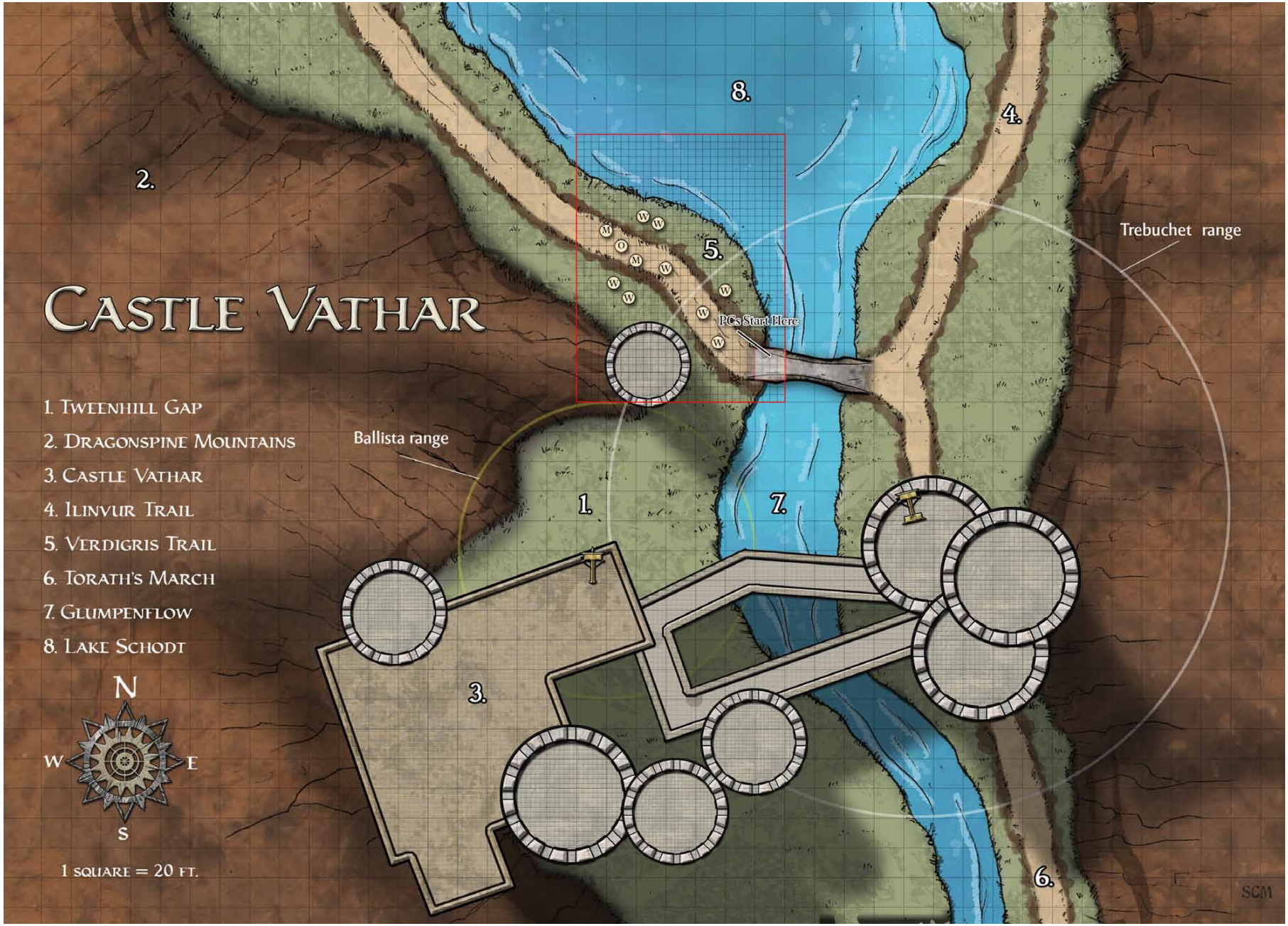
As the PCs dine, they may converse freely with the Lord Protector or any of his guests. For his part, Anivar is interested in only one outcome: soliciting the agreement of the PCs to thwart the barbarian incursions in the north.

Once dinner is concluded and the characters have given their oath, they are escorted out of the castle and back to their suites at the Cracked Crown. They are asked by the Knight Commander to report to the hippogriff aerie atop Castle Atuke (Location U on the Phlan city map) in the hour before dawn for their long flight to the north.

When the heroes are ready to depart for the evening, read:

Rising from the table, the Lord Protector glares at you with barely contained rage etched on his features. Slamming his fist upon the dinner table he calls out, "The heathen barbarians dare attack our holdings in the north, and for that I would see them driven from completely from The Ride. Bring swift justice to our enemies, Knight Commander, for they'll surely offer none in return. Return to Phlan triumphant and present to me the heads of their chieftains. This I demand!"

The characters are offered the Major Quest—Bring Me Their Heads. Reward: 4,000 XP.


Castle Vathar
1. Tweenhill Gap
2. Dragonspine Mountains
3. Castle Vathar
4. Ilinvur Trail
5. Verdigris Trail
6. Torath's March
7. Glumpenflow
8. Lake Schodt
N
W
E
S
1 square = 20 ft.
Ballista range
Trebuchet range
PCs Start Here
SCM

M1: Defend the Caravan

Encounter Level 14 (5,200 XP)

Setup

Oshikam (O)
2 Vaegould marauders (M)
8 Vaegould warriors (W)

This encounter takes place before the walls of Castle Vathar in rugged wilderness north of Phlan. As the PCs arrive at the citadel, they spot a caravan in the distance attempting a desperate dash toward the safety of Vathar. In pursuit of the beleaguered merchants is a raiding party of horse nomads.

When the heroes reach Castle Vathar, read:

You arrive above the castle walls just as the evening sun descends behind the craggy peaks of the Dragonspine Mountains. Looking north beyond the citadel, your eyes are drawn to a great cloud of dust, the haze stirred up by the hooves of a barbarian raiding party moving fast down Verdigris Trail. Its quarry is a column of wagons desperately racing for the protection of Castle Vathar.

When Warlord Oshikam is first attacked, read:

You see a human figure that appears afflicted by some sort of elemental infusion. Streaks of vivid hues surge through his veins, giving an eerie glow. He is armed with a longspear that bears many trophies of battle—scalps, medallions, and other emblems taken from foes. He shakes the weapon at you, roaring "I am Oshikam, slayer of a hundred men! The sacred tokens of my spear grant me power! You cannot slay me!" Then he spurs his mount and thunders toward you.

Tactics

The Barbarians of the Ride are no fools. The raiding party knows the defenses of the fortress are too strong for a straightforward assault. Their intent was to harass the caravan briefly, then feign a panicked retreat in the hope of drawing the castle defenders into pursuit. Once the pursuers moved beyond view from the castle, they would be waylaid by a reserve force waiting just north of Lake Schodt. The arrival of the PCs is likely to throw that plan out the window.

Warlord Oshikam still tries to move the battle away from the castle if only to stay beyond the range of the trebuchets. If the characters follow, he leads them as far away as possible. In any event, his supporting cavalry arrives when the warlord becomes bloodied.

Mounted Combat

This is a great opportunity to give your players experience with mounted combat and to reward those players who took the Mounted Combat feat.
If the PCs are having difficulty with this encounter, let them realize (with an Insight skill check) that a barbarian opponent becomes less effective if knocked off of his horse or if the horse is slain. Vaegould Marauders are experienced riders with bonuses against being dismounted, but this could nevertheless be a powerful tactic to use against them.

While the characters are engaged in melee, the Horselord Marauders use ranged attacks while remaining mobile. They pick out the weakest of their opponents and concentrate their attacks against them. The Horselord Warriors always protect their chieftain. If he is killed in the fight, some try to recover his longspear and flee with it while others cover their retreat.

Features of the Area

Trebuchet: A weapon crew on the castle walls aids the characters by firing massive stones at the horse nomads with a large trebuchet.

Trebuchet and Crew	**Level 6 Artillery**
Large natural humanoid	XP 250
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +8
HP 50; **Bloodied** 25	
AC 23; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 20	
Speed 0	
Launched Stone (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)	
Area burst 1 within 40 (minimum range 10); +15 vs. AC; 4d6 damage.	

Illumination: Twilight (dim light).

Glumpenflow: The river is 5 feet deep and is difficult terrain. Characters in the water gain cover except against attacks from submerged enemies. Fighting in the water imposes a -2 penalty to attack rolls except with spears and crossbows.

Lake Schodt: Beyond the shallow shoreline, the water varies from 10 to 15 feet deep. Creatures in deep water gain cover except against attacks from submerged enemies. Fighting in the water imposes a -2 penalty to attack rolls except with spears and crossbows, and powers that have the fire keyword take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

Developments

If characters don't go to the defense of the caravan by immediately attacking the nomads, then the caravan is overrun and everyone in it is massacred within sight of the castle walls. There will be no survivors to warn of attacks on Ilinvur, and the heroes might arrive too late to save the village.

Oshikam (O) **Level 15 Elite Soldier (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 2,400

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +9
HP 290; **Bloodied** 145
AC 30; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 27
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6 (8 when mounted on steppe pony)
Action Points 1

⊕ **Longspear** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +22 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage (crit 3d10 + 26).

↓ **Saddleback Skewer** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
While mounted; Oshikam charges and makes a *longspear* attack. On a hit, the target is knocked prone, and Oshikam makes another *longspear* attack against a different target within reach.

↷ **Jolting Hex** (minor; recharge ⚃ ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Lightning**
Range 10; +20 vs. Will; 2d8 + 6 lightning damage, and the target is marked until the end of Oshikam's next turn. Using this power does not provoke opportunity attacks.

↯ **Vaegould Retribution** (immediate reaction, when an ally within 5 squares is reduced to 0 hit points; at-will) ✦ **Thunder**
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +18 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 6 thunder damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Call of the Warlord (when bloodied)
At the start of its turn, the vaegould warlord calls into battle four additional vaegould warriors

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Primordial
Skills Athletics +20, Endurance +15, Nature +14
Str 26 (+15) **Dex** 19 (+11) **Wis** 15 (+9)
Con 17 (+10) **Int** 14 (+9) **Cha** 18 (+11)
Equipment longspear

If the heroes question a captured Vaegould tribesman, they will get no useful information through any means. The PCs can use a DC 27 Intimidate check on the Vaegould warlord, Oshikam. If successful, they will learn about the true nature of the barbarian attacks and their connection to some great elemental power. The DM is encouraged to ad lib this portion and give out small details about the larger threat to the region, namely the invasion of elemental forces and possibly the connection to a long dormant "lost god."

Warlord Oshikam's longspear is a powerful symbol to the clan, and it's important to the heroes as a clue to a puzzle that arises later in the adventure—see Skill Challenge S1: All This Has Happened Before, page 71. If Warlord Oshikam escapes, or if he dies but one of his warriors escapes with the longspear, then the characters won't have access to that glyph's position.

8 Vaegould Warriors (W) **Level 11 Minion Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 150 each

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +7
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 25; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22
Speed 6 (8 when mounted on steppe pony)

⊕ **Hand Axe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+16 vs. AC; 7 damage.

↷ **Shortbow** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 15/30; +16 vs. AC; 8 damage.

Brotherhood of the Ride
The vaegould warrior doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving while mounted.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial
Skills Athletics +15, Endurance +12, Nature +12
Str 20 (+10) **Dex** 24 (+12) **Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 15 (+7) **Int** 15 (+7) **Cha** 12 (+6)
Equipment hand axe, shortbow

2 Vaegould Marauders (M) **Level 13 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, human XP 800 each

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +9
HP 128; **Bloodied** 64
AC 27; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 22
Saving Throws: +5 against being dismounted
Speed 6 (8 when mounted on steppe pony)

⊕ **Waraxe** (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon
+18 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage.

↷ **Mounted Archer** (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon
Range 20/40; +18 vs. AC; 3d6 + 6 damage.

↷ **Three-Fingered Release** (standard; recharge ⚃ ⚄) ✦ **Weapon**
Range 20/40; +18 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Brotherhood of the Ride
The vaegould marauder doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving while mounted.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Primordial
Skills Athletics +20, Endurance +15, Nature +14
Str 26 (+15) **Dex** 19 (+11) **Wis** 15 (+9)
Con 17 (+10) **Int** 14 (+9) **Cha** 18 (+11)
Equipment waraxe

Steppe Pony **Level 6 Brute**
Large natural beast (mount) XP 300 each

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +12; low-light vision
HP 90; **Bloodied** 45
AC 20; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 17
Speed 8

⊕ **Kick** (standard; at-will)
+9 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6 damage.

↓ **Trample** (standard; at-will)
The steppe pony can move up to its speed and enter enemies' spaces. This movement provokes opportunity attacks, and the steppe pony must end its move in an unoccupied space. When it enters an enemy's space, the steppe pony makes a trample attack; +7 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 8 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Charger (while mounted by a friendly rider of 6th level or higher with the Mounted Combat feat; at-will) ✦ **Mount**
The steppe pony grants its rider a +1 bonus to attack rolls on charge attacks.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages**—
Str 24 (+11) **Dex** 17 (+7) **Wis** 17 (+7)
Con 20 (+9) **Int** 5 (+1) **Cha** 13 (+5)

M2: Civil Defense

Encounter Level 14 (5,400 XP)

Setup

1 Vaegould elementalist (E)
2 tempest wisps (W)
2 chillfire destroyers (D)
1 stormstone fury (F)

The characters arrive at the small village of Ilinvur to find it ransacked and destroyed. As they approach, they can see the smoldering ruins of several buildings from a distance. Near the small town square, they are attacked by some remaining elemental forces.

When the PCs arrive in town, read:

The town square appears to be the best place to look for survivors. As you approach you witness two hulking beasts milling around a small well. Caliginous rocky husks form over their bodies as steam hisses out between cracks. They step back from the well when they spot your approach.

Features of the Area

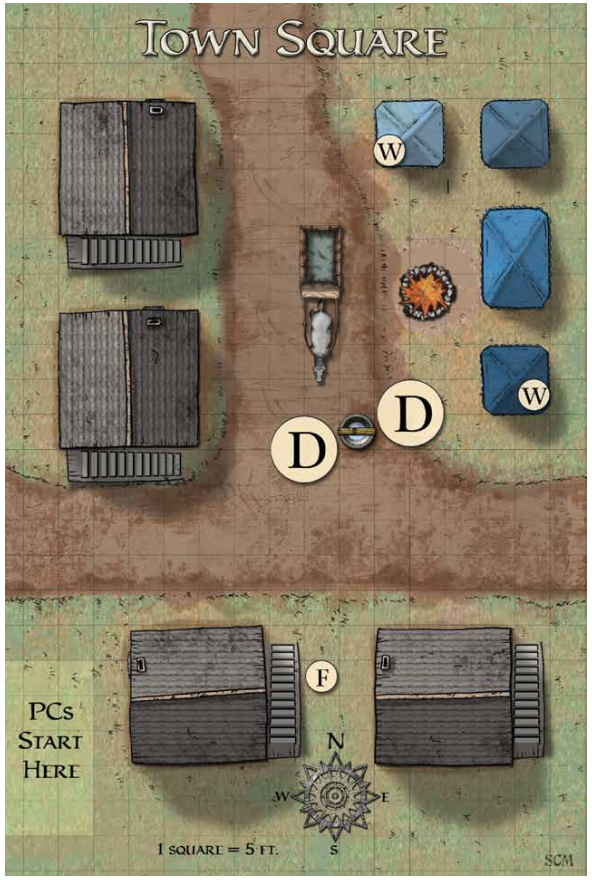
Merchant Stalls: These stands are made of reinforced wood and are permanent structures of this area. They are 10 feet in height and width and provide superior cover to any creature that hides behind them. A successful DC 11 Athletics check allows the structure to be scaled.

Houses: Two-story bungalows stand around the perimeter of the town square. They are 30 feet high and have stairwells to the side that count as difficult terrain.

Fire Pit: This is a communal fire that the merchants and other denizens of Ilinvur use to keep warm in the cold climate of the area. Any creature that starts its turn within the fire takes 1d10 fire damage and 5 ongoing fire damage (save ends).

Cart and Horse: The corpse of a horse is still harnessed to a small cart here. The cart provides superior cover to any small creature that stands behind it.

Well: The well in the center of the town square is constructed of mortared stone and is roughly 3 feet high. It counts as difficult terrain for movement. Any medium or small creature that starts its turn on the well must make a DC 18 Acrobatics check to avoid falling to the bottom. Creatures that fall to the bottom take 2d10 points of damage and must make a DC 18 Athletics check to climb back out.



Tactics

The elementals in this encounter are interested mainly in holding the ground they have already secured. The chillfire destroyers move immediately to flank the fire pit square. The Vaegould elementalist appears in the fire pit at the start of its turn on round 2. Once on the field of battle, the Vaegould elementalist will rain devastating attacks from a distance. The tempest wisp remains hidden until Vaegould elementalist arrives, then use their whistling wind attack to slide their enemies into positions that are most beneficial to their allies.

Vaegould Elementalist (E)	**Level 13 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 800
Initiative +9	**Senses** Perception +9
HP 131; **Bloodied** 65	
AC 27; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 25	
Speed 8	
⊕ or ⊗ **Haunting Spirits** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**	
Ranged 5; +18 vs. Will; 1d10 + 6 psychic damage. Until the end of the Vaegould elementalist's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to an ally of the elementalist's choice.	
Earthrage Spirit (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Thunder**	
Close blast 5; enemies only; +17 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 7 thunder damage, and the target is knocked prone.	
Raging Storm Spirit (standard; encounter) ✦ **Lightning, Thunder, Zone**	
Area burst 5 within 10; +18 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 7 lightning damage. Until the end of the encounter, the elementalist and any ally deals 1d6 extra thunder damage when it hits an enemy that is within the zone. The zone lasts until the end of the encounter.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common
Skills Athletics +12, Endurance +15, Nature +14	
Str 13 (+7)	**Dex** 16 (+9)	**Wis** 22 (+12)
Con 19 (+10)	**Int** 16 (+9)	**Cha** 19 (+10)

2 Tempest Wisps (W) **Level 13 Controller**
Medium elemental magical beast (air) XP 800 each

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +10
HP 134; **Bloodied** 67
AC 27; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 24
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** insubstantial while not bloodied
Speed 0, fly 7 (hover)

Air Slash (standard; at-will)
+16 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 5 damage.

Whistling Wind (standard; at-will)
Ranged 10; +16 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 3 damage, and the tempest wisp slides the target 1 square

Tumbling Updraft (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
Ranged 10; +20 vs. Fortitude; the target is lifted up 20 feet (4 squares) and restrained (save ends). *Failed Saving Throw:* The target is lifted up another 20 feet. *Successful Saving Throw:* The target falls and takes falling damage, if applicable.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial
Str 15 (+8) **Dex** 19 (+10) **Wis** 19 (+10)
Con 22 (+12) **Int** 9 (+5) **Cha** 14 (+8)

2 Chillfire Destroyers (D) **Level 14 Brute**
Large elemental magical beast (cold, fire) XP 1,000 each

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +12
Leaking Firecore (Fire) aura 2; while the chillfire destroyer is bloodied, each creature that starts its turn within the aura takes 10 fire damage.
HP 173; **Bloodied** 86; see also *firecore breach*
AC 26; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 25
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 cold, 10 fire
Speed 5

Freezing Slam (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; 1d12 + 6 damage plus 1d12 cold damage.

Trample (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
The chillfire destroyer moves its speed and can move through enemies' spaces. The destroyer makes an attack; +15 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 6 damage plus 1d10 cold damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Firecore Breach (when the chillfire destroyer drops to 0 hit points) ✦ **Fire**
The destroyer does not die until the start of its next turn. Until then, the destroyer can take no actions. At the start of the destroyer's next turn, it makes an attack: close burst 3; +15 vs. Reflex; 4d10 + 6 fire damage.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial
Str 16 (+10) **Dex** 20 (+12) **Wis** 20 (+12)
Con 23 (+13) **Int** 5 (+4) **Cha** 12 (+8)

Stormstone Fury (F) **Level 14 Artillery**
Medium elemental magical beast (air, earth) XP 1,000

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +9
HP 113; **Bloodied** 56
AC 26; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 25
Immune disease, petrification, poison; **Resist** 10 thunder
Speed 6

Grinding Stones (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +21 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage.

Hurtling Thunderstone (standard; at-will) ✦ **Thunder**
Ranged 20; +21 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage. *Miss:* Half damage. *Effect:* One square the target currently occupies becomes the origin square of a burst 2 attack that occurs at the start of the stormstone fury's next turn: +19 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 6 thunder damage.

Shrapnel Burst (minor; recharge ⚁ ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Thunder**
Close burst 2; +21 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6 damage plus 1d6 thunder damage, and the stormstone fury pushes the target 2 squares.

Meld to Ground (when first bloodied; requires the stormstone fury to be on the ground; encounter) ✦ **Teleportation**
The fury disappears, and no creatures have line of sight or line of effect to it. At the start of its next turn, the fury appears within 10 squares of its previous space.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial
Str 16 (+10) **Dex** 20 (+12) **Wis** 15 (+9)
Con 23 (+13) **Int** 6 (+5) **Cha** 20 (+12)

S1: All This Has Happened Before...

Encounter Level 13 (4,000 XP)

The Horreb ritual cube has 54 individual glyphs covering its surface (3 glyphs per row, 3 rows per side, 6 sides). In order to successfully activate cube and cast the ritual of Element Binding, the PCs must first identify the nine glyphs which comprise the ritual sequence.

In preparation for this skill challenge, the Dungeon Master should print out the nine glyphs displayed on page 82.

Part 1: Deciphering the Glyphs

Part 1: Deciphering the Glyphs	**Level 13**
Skill Challenge	XP 3,200

Desperate to identify the correct glyphs for the binding ritual, you pore through stacks of dusty tomes searching for that proverbial needle in a haystack.

This skill challenge plays out over the course of several days. With the necessary travel, research, consultation, and study, each character can make just one skill check or aid another check per day.

Complexity
4 (requires 10 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills
Arcana, History, Insight, Streetwise.

Success
The party is able to find the 9 correct glyphs out of the 54 on the Horreb ritual cube.

Failure
The characters are able to discern the 9 correct glyphs out of the 54 on the Horreb ritual cube, but each character suffers a -2 penalty to all skill checks during Part 2.

Ritual
Consult Mystic Sages (level 10) The PCs consult mystic sages to aid in their research. This ritual can be used to gain 1 success in this challenge.

Arcana
DC 18 (2 successes maximum) The character understands the nature of magical artifacts and is able to discern one of the arcane glyphs.

History
DC 18 (no maximum) While rummaging through old tomes in Mantor's Library, the character finds ancient writings on the glyph.

Insight
DC 23 (1 success maximum) The character identifies one of the glyphs through deductive reasoning.

Religion
DC 18 (2 successes maximum) The character understands the nature of magical artifacts and is able to discern one of the arcane glyphs.

Streetwise
DC 23 (2 successes maximum) By hobnobbing with the right folk, the character uncovers the nature of an arcane glyph.

Part 2: Unlocking the Ritual

With the nine glyphs identified, the heroes must find the correct sequence on the cube to trigger the ritual. Regardless of the number of successes, the PCs can know the locations of a maximum of seven glyphs by the end of this skill challenge—six from this challenge and one from Warlord Oshikam's longspear.

Part 2: Unlocking the Ritual **Level 13**
Skill Challenge XP 800

Unlocking the correct sequence to trigger the ritual is another challenge altogether.

This skill challenge likely plays out over the course of several days. With the necessary travel, research, consultation, and study, each character can make just one skill check or aid another check per day.

Note that only successful Arcana and Thievery checks allow players to fill in any glyph of their choice. Other skills fill in specific glyphs. No matter when successful Arcana and Thievery checks are made in the sequence of skill checks, wait until the end of the challenge to fill in those glyphs, to prevent duplication of another skill's discovery. As glyphs are discovered, place (or draw) the corresponding glyph anywhere on a 3-by-3 grid, so players can see their progress clearly.

Complexity
2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures)

Success
The party figures out the correct locations of six glyphs. This will aid them greatly when the time comes to activate the device (see Sealing the Portal, page 78).

Failure
The players correctly locate fewer than the six glyphs possible at this time. This will make it more difficult to find the correct sequence when they need to activate the device.

Arcana
DC 23 (1 success maximum) The character gains the correct location for one of the nine glyphs. The player selects any unplaced glyph at the end of the skill challenge and learns its placement. Read the associated journal entry for the glyph.

Insight
DC 18 (no success) While a successful check does not yield a success in the challenge, it grants a +2 bonus to the next skill check for this challenge.

Thievery (trained only)
DC 23 (1 success maximum) A successful Thievery check allows the character to find the correct location of a glyph through his understanding of such mechanically complex devices. The player selects any unplaced glyph at the end of the skill challenge and learns its placement. Read the associated journal entry for the glyph.

History
DC 18 (1 success maximum) Research in Mantor's Library reveals the history of Barze. Read Journal Entry 1, page 79.

Religion
DC 18 (1 success maximum) Within a dusty crypt of Valhingen Graveyard the characters uncover a dark passage. Read Journal Entry 10, page 80.

Intimidate
DC 18 (1 success maximum) Priests at the Lyceum of the Black Lord (location C on the Phlan city map) recognize the archaic symbol of Bane. Read Journal Entry 12, page 80.

Diplomacy
DC 18 (1 success maximum) The chamberlain of House Jannarsk is well studied in the heraldry of the Moonsea. Read Journal Entry 15, page 81.

Streetwise
DC 18 (1 success maximum) Blindfolded and led into the catacombs beneath the city, you are 'interviewed' by the local thieves' guild. Read Journal Entry 6, page 79.

Nature
DC 18 (1 success maximum) A missionary druid visiting the city from the Vanishing Hills recognizes the ancient goliath rune. Read Journal Entry 8, page 80.

The seventh glyph's position is hinted at by one of the trophies slung on Warlord Oshikam's longspear (from M1: Defend the Caravan, page 67). If characters picked up or examined the longspear after the battle, then the first time during this challenge that a player rolls 25 or higher on a skill check, or rolls successfully with a skill that has already succeeded once before, the character has a flash of intuition that leads them to Journal Entry 17 (page 81) and correctly places the Varm glyph. If the longspear was carried off by one of the barbarians or the characters ignored it after the battle, then this realization comes only with any skill check result of 25 or higher.

Proper placement of the Forharn and Flindyke glyphs (journal entries 4 and 14, respectively) cannot be obtained from this challenge. The PCs need to travel to those locations to uncover their positions.

M3: Lyceum of Rimefire

Encounter Level 14 (5,750 XP)

Setup

Chaku'kawr (C)
2 havoc gnoll prey-takers (P)
10 gnoll sycophants (S)

The heroes arrive at Frozen Flindyke during the fading hours of the day. The ancient city bears true to its name as all infrastructure has been encased in a thin veil of ice. The PCs come across a natural auditorium where they find a congregation of gnolls. If any of the characters understand the abyssal tongue, they know that the chieftain is speaking of the incursion of elementals into the region and is delegating authority for defense. If the PCs try to interact with the gnolls by any means, they are immediately attacked.

Tactics

The gnolls of Flindyke are merciless and clever. Working flawlessly together, the congregation uses its superior numbers to swarm their foes. During combat, the sycophants work to bring down one target at a time. The gnoll chieftain prefers to sit back and control as much of the battlefield as he can, using *vortex of chaos* to daze enemies. The havoc gnoll prey-takers use their nets to entrap opponents and skewer them with their spears.

Parlay?

When the gnoll chieftain Chaku'kawr becomes bloodied, he commands his followers to stand down while he attempts to parlay with the heroes.

If the heroes are agreeable to a cessation of hostilities, Chaku'kawr speaks:
"The cube you carry—its likeness I have seen before. This is most fascinating. Please, sheathe your weapons and be at ease, for by my order no harm shall befall you. Your coming has been foretold, cube-bearers. I shall take you to the sanctorum if you will but follow me."

Leading the characters along a narrow path descending the Pelauvir Gorge, Chaku'kawr stops before a solid wall along the cliff face. Speaking the words "Great Spear" in the Abyssal tongue, a doorway slides open in the earth. After descending through a labyrinth of tunnels, the PCs arrive at their destination, the Gnoll Sanctorum. Inside, Chaku'kawr provides the PCs with the correct placement for the gnoll glyph (Read Journal Entry 14, page 80) and a map with detailed directions to the Monument of the Ancients.

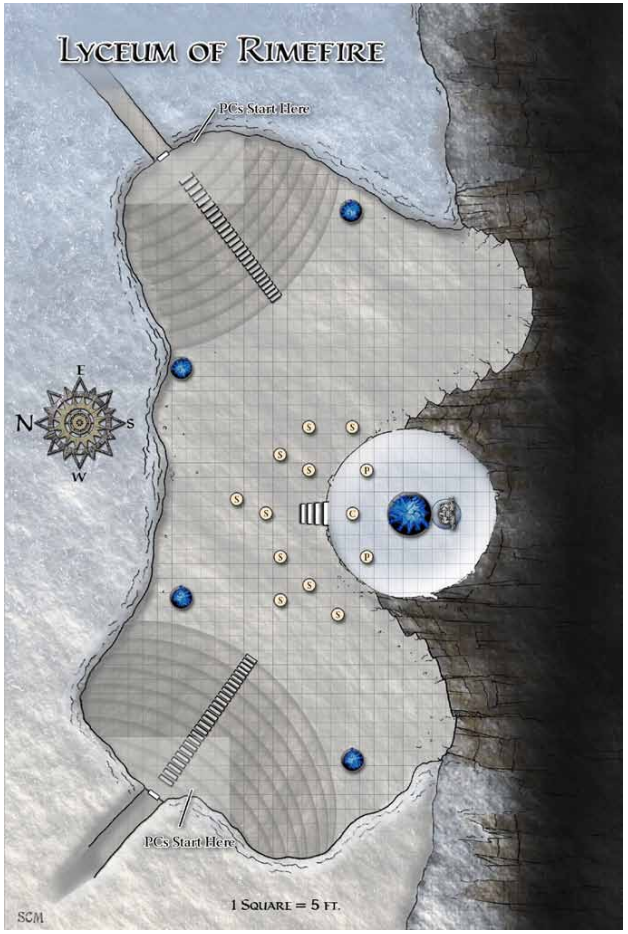
If the characters persist in their attacks, read:
"You are possessed of the same heart as the Dark Three, then? So be it. If I'm called to Yeenoghu's Realm this day, I'll take you screaming to the Abyss with me!"

Chaku'kawr fights to the death. The heroes will need to learn the location of the Monument of the Ancients in some other manner left up to the DM. (They might, for example, interrogate a dying gnoll after this fight, or discover a scrap of parchment on Chaku'kawr's body which leads them to the sanctorum after a suitably hazardous search.)

Chaku'kawr (C)	**Level 16 Elite Controller (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid, gnoll	XP 2,800
Initiative +13	**Senses** Perception +12, low-light vision
Bloodlust aura 3; all allies inside the aura gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls.	
HP 314; **Bloodied** 157	
AC 32; **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 31	
Resist 10 variable (1/encounter)	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 7	
Action Points 1	
Caustic Touch (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire** +20 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 7 fire damage, or 2d8 + 9 fire damage while bloodied.	
Arcing Chaos Bolt (standard; at-will) Ranged 10; targets one or two enemies; +19 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of Chaku'kawr's next turn.	
Furious Blastback (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) ✦ Fire Close blast 3; +20 vs. Fortitude; 4d10 + 7 fire damage, or 4d10 + 9 fire damage while bloodied, and the target is pushed 6 squares.	
Vortex of Chaos (standard; encounter) ✦ **Fire, Psychic** Area burst 1 within 10; +18 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 8 fire damage, and target takes ongoing 10 psychic damage and is dazed (save ends both).	
Sycophantic Fervor (minor 1/round; at-will) A gnoll sycophant within sight of Chaku'kawr makes a basic attack as a free action.	
Shun the Nonbeliever (immediate reaction; when an enemy moves adjacent to Chaku'kawr; at-will) The target slides 3 squares.	
Pack Attack Chaku'kawr deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more allies adjacent to it.	
Alignment Chaotic Evil	**Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Arcana +17, Religion +20	
Str 15 (+10)	**Dex** 16 (+11) **Wis** 18 (+12)
Con 21 (+13)	**Int** 19 (+12) **Cha** 24 (+15)

Features of the Area

Braziers: Four caldrons aflame with blue-tinted rimefire stand near the base of the spectator stands. A larger caldron rests on the grand dais, spewing azure flame high into the sky. These caldrons are difficult terrain. Any creature that passes through or starts their turn within the caldron takes 2d10 cold damage and ongoing 5 cold damage (save ends).



Gorge: In front of this natural amphitheatre is a gorge that drops 50 feet to the river below. Any creature that is pushed over the edge and falls to the icy water below takes 5d10 cold damage.

Ice-covered Dais: Perched on the edge of the gorge is a raised, circular dais covered in a thick layer of ice. The entire dais counts as difficult terrain. Any creature other than Chaku'kawr who begins their turn on the dais must make a DC 11 Acrobatics check or be knocked prone.

Statue: The menacing statue of Yeenoghu on the dais serves as a grim reminder of the demon lord the gnolls venerate. Any enemy of the gnolls who ends their turn next to the statue is subject to the following attack: +15 vs. Will; ongoing 10 necrotic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to saving throws (save ends both).

10 Gnoll Sycophants (S) **Level 12 Minion Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid XP 175 each

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +17, low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 28; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21
Speed 7

Handaxe (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+18 vs. AC; 7 damage.

Longbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +19 vs. AC; 5 damage.

Pack Attack
A gnoll sycophant deals an extra 5 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +7, Stealth +11
Str 26 (+14) **Dex** 23 (+12) **Wis** 18 (+10)
Con 18 (+10) **Int** 12 (+7) **Cha** 11 (+6)
Equipment handaxe, longbow

2 Havoc Gnoll Prey-Takers (P) **Level 11 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 600 each

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +13, low-lght vision
HP 91; **Bloodied** 45
AC 24; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 24, **Will** 22
Speed 6

Spear (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+16 vs AC; 2d6 + 5 damage.

Spear (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +18 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage

Net (standard; medium or smaller creature only; recharges when no creature is immobilized by this power) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 4/8; +16 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is knocked prone and immobilized and cannot stand (until escape).

Ranging Leap (move; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
The prey-taker shifts 3 squares and ignores difficult terrain for this move.

Net Master
The prey-taker deals an extra 1d6 damage on attacks made against an enemy immobilized by its net, and it takes no penalty for attacking a prone creature with a ranged attack when that creature is immobilized by its net.

Pack Attack
A gnoll sycophant deals an extra 10 damage on melee attacks against an enemy that has two or more allies adjacent to it.

Alignment Chaotic Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +14, Stealth +16
Str 19 (+9) **Dex** 22 (+11) **Wis** 16 (+8)
Con 19 (+9) **Int** 15 (+7) **Cha** 18 (+9)
Equipment leather armor, net, 2 spears

S2: Crucible of Chaos

Encounter Level 12 (2,800 XP)

Setup

Start this skill challenge when the PCs set out for the Monument of the Ancients from Frozen Flindyke. This skill challenge spreads out over the entire trek, which is sure to take several days.

Crucible of Chaos
Skill Challenge 2,800 XP

Spending any amount of time in the frozen north requires great stamina, nerves of steel, and a bit of luck. The most pressing challenge that must be overcome is exposure to the harsh terrain and elemental hazards endemic to the region.

Complexity
4 (10 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills
Acrobatics, Athletics, History, Nature, Perception

Success
The characters arrive at the Monument of the Ancients and recover any healing surges lost during this skill challenge (see special).

Failure
The characters reach the Monument of the Ancients but they have been unable to replenish their healing surges.

Special
After making a primary skill check (regardless of success or failure), the character must make a DC15 Endurance check. Failure on the Endurance check results in that character losing one healing surge.

In addition, when a character fails at a primary skill check, every character in the group automatically loses one healing surge.

Endure Elements Ritual
(1 success maximum) The characters ward themselves from Pazunia's extreme temperatures. Success on this ritual eliminates any further Endurance checks.

Acrobatics
DC 18 (2 successes maximum) You help guide the party over hazards such as icy patches of ground and sudden gusts of wind that would otherwise knock party members off their feet.

Athletics
DC 18 (2 successes maximum) Your athleticism helps your allies negotiate treacherous crags, traverse hazardous scree fields, and leap frozen tributaries.

History
DC 18 (2 successes maximum) Referencing maps and lore on the region, you identify landmarks that help the party find a safe route.

Nature
DC 18 (4 successes maximum) You build a shelter, granting your party a temporary reprieve from the harsh elements. The characters have a 1 in 6 chance of triggering a random hostile encounter while camped.

DC 23 (2 successes maximum) You locate a small, flowing spring from which to quench your thirst.

Perception
DC 18 (4 successes maximum) Your keen senses allow you to locate safe paths, avoid hazards, and otherwise help guide the group on the trek.

M4: Anchor of Chaos

Encounter Level 13 (4,800 XP plus 150 XP per minion)

Setup

Pyricus, Herald of Maram (P)
Earth hellions (H)
Azure savages (S)
Incendiary vilifiers (V)
Frozen racers (R)

The PCs arrive at the frosty keep where the monument of the ancients was erected. Standing atop a shallow-sided pyramid, reaching toward the sky, they see the monstrosity that is Pyricus—a lesser primordial used to herald the coming of Maram of the Great Spear. Above him, swirling and bathed in unearthly colors, is a partially-formed portal to the Elemental Chaos. As soon as the heroes have taken in this unnerving sight, they are immediately summoned next to Pyricus at the top of the spire.

When the PCs arrive at the Anchor of Chaos, read:

As you stare toward the elemental evil that is Pyricus, your skin tingles and the sharp smell of sulfur fills the air. As you begin to react, you are instantly teleported to the spire within easy reach of the hulking abomination.

When a character is first hit by Pyricus, read:
"You have come so far, brave mortals, only to die before my feet. Soon you will know the true power to my liege, Maram of the Great Spear!"

Tactics

Pyricus is rooted to the ground until the PCs close the gate to the elemental chaos. It will defend the area with all of its might to prevent that from happening.

If Pyricus notices the hero that has the cube, it will immediately target that character until they are slain.

At the beginning of each round including the first, four elementals (one of each type) are summoned to the corresponding altars. They remain in play until killed. As long as the portal remains open, an elemental of each type is summoned each round, regardless of how many are already in the fight and regardless of whether Pyricus is alive or dead.

Earth Hellion **Level 11 Minion Brute**
Medium elemental magical beast (earth, thunder) XP 150 each

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +7
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 23; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 23
Speed 6

⊕ **Earth Smash** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Thunder**
+14 vs. AC; 7 thunder damage and ongoing 5 thunder damage (save ends).

⊖ **Thunderous Destruction** (free, when reduced to 0 hp; encounter) ✦ **Thunder**
Close burst 1; each non-elemental creature in the burst takes 10 thunder damage.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 15 (+7) **Dex** 15 (+7) **Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 21 (+10) **Int** 15 (+7) **Cha** 10 (+5)

Azure Savage **Level 11 Minion Soldier**
Medium elemental magical beast (air) XP 150 each

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +11
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 27; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 20
Speed 6

⊕ **Crackling Slash** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Lightning**
+18 vs. AC; 7 lightning damage, and the target is marked until the end of the azure savage's next turn.

⊖ **Shocking Destruction** (free, when reduced to 0 hp; encounter) ✦ **Lightning**
Close burst 1; each non-elemental creature in the burst takes 8 lightning damage.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages**–
Str 15 (+7) **Dex** 15 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 21 (+10) **Int** 12 (+6) **Cha** 18 (+9)

Pyricus, Herald of Maram (P) **Level 13 Solo Controller**
Huge elemental magical beast XP 4,000

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +16; truesight 20, tremorsense 20
Chaotic Rebuke (Psychic) aura 1; any creature that starts its turn within the aura takes 5 psychic damage.
HP 512; **Bloodied** 256
AC 30; **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 28
Resist 10 fire, cold, lightning; **Vulnerable** 10 acid
Saving Throws +5
Speed 4
Action Points 2

⊕ **Tentacle Lash** (standard, at will)
+17 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 6 psychic damage and the target is pushed 2 squares.

Chaos Lash (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic, Cold**
Tentacles lash out and strike all nearby opponents. Close burst 3; +17 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 6 psychic and cold damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.

Kinetic Explosion (standard; recharge when first bloodied) ✦ **Psychic, Force**
Range 20; +17 vs. Reflex, 3d10 + 6 force damage, and the target is stunned (save ends).

Mind Breaker (minor; recharge when an enemy within 5 squares spends a healing surge) ✦ **Psychic, Charm**
Pyricus unleashes horrific visions of the elemental chaos. Close burst 3; +17 vs. Will; 3d6 + 6 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Brutal Riposte (immediate reaction, when subjected to forced movement; recharge when first bloodied) ✦ **Lightning, Psychic**
Close burst 1; +18 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 lightning and psychic damage, and the target is stunned until the end of the herald's next turn.

Turbid Armament (standard, recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞) ✦ **Cold**
Area burst 1 within 10; +17 vs. Reflex; 3d6 cold damage, and the target is slowed until the end of Pyricus's next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial
Str 22 (+12) **Dex** 13 (+7) **Wis** 22 (+12)
Con 19 (+10) **Int** 22 (+12) **Cha** 13 (+7)

Incendiary Vilifier	Level 11 Minion Skirmisher
Medium elemental magical beast (fire)	XP 150 each
Initiative +16	**Senses** Perception +9
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 23; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 23	
Speed 7	
(standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire**	
Searing Snap +16 vs. AC; 3 fire damage and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).	
(free, when reduced to 0 hp; encounter) ✦ **Fire**	
Burning Destruction Close burst 1; each non-elemental creature in the burst takes 8 fire damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages**–
Str 12 (+6)	**Dex** 15 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 15 (+7)	**Int** 12 (+6) **Cha** 15 (+7)

Frozen Racer	Level 11 Minion Skirmisher
Medium elemental magical beast (cold, water)	XP 150 each
Initiative +15	**Senses** Perception +6
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 24; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 22	
Speed 6	
(standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**	
Frosty Bite The frozen racer can shift its speed before making this attack. +16 vs. AC; 7 cold damage.	
(free, when reduced to 0 hp; encounter) ✦ **Cold**	
Frozen Destruction Close burst 1; each non-elemental creature in the burst takes 8 cold damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages**–
Str 12 (+6)	**Dex** 27 (+13) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 12 (+6)	**Int** 18 (+9) **Cha** 12 (+6)

Features of the Area

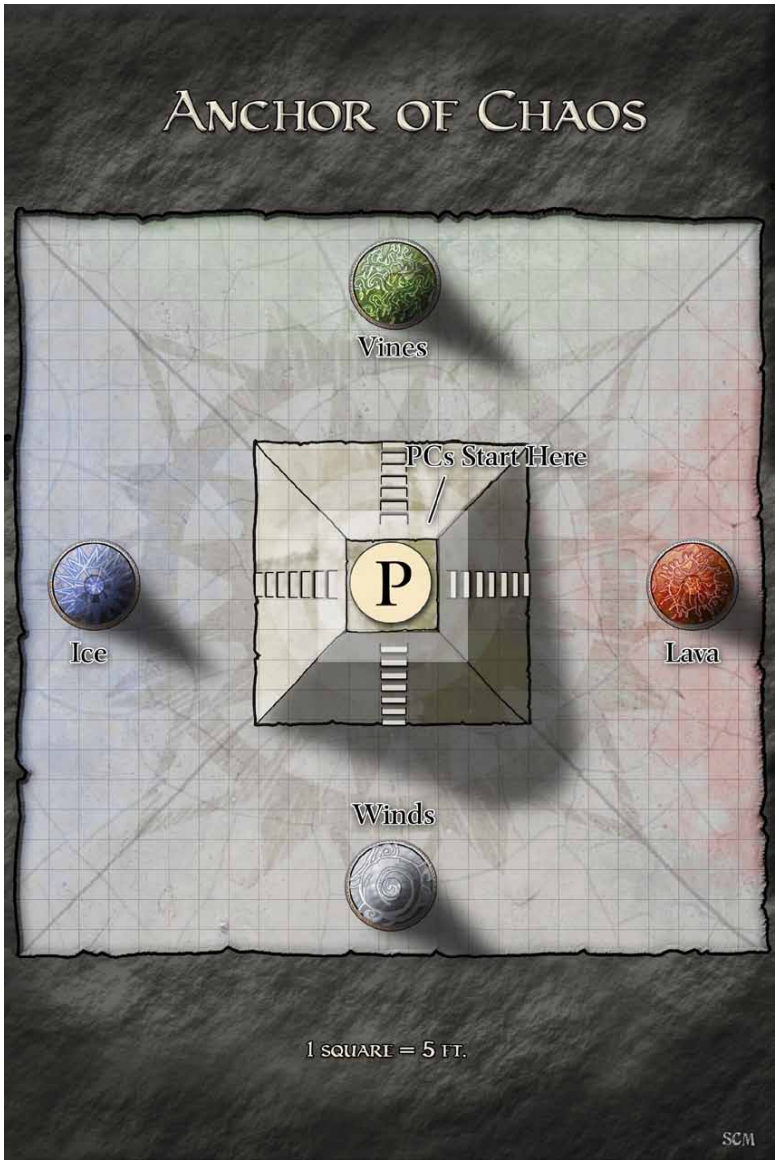
The Pyramid: The sides of the pyramid rise at approximately a 30-degree angle to a height of 10 feet above the ground. Each side is built of smooth, fitted stone and has a 5-foot-wide flight of seven steps ascending to the top, which is also smooth and flat. Characters can move and fight normally on the top of the pyramid and on the steps. The smooth, sloping sides of the pyramid, however, offer poor footing. Whenever a character or monster is hit in combat and at least half of the squares it occupies are non-step sides of the pyramid, it can also be slid 1 square (or 1 additional square) down the pyramid, at the attacker's choice. This slide can be straight or diagonal, as long as it moves the creature downward. Pyricus has two exceptions: It can be slid downward by this rule only by Large or larger creatures, and creatures it hits are slid 2 squares (or 2 additional squares) downward instead of 1.

Garden of Vines: This ornate archway is covered in vines and other living plants. Flowers of many exotic varieties are blooming, and a green glow emanates all around it. Earth hellions emerge from this shrine.

Shards of Ice: Large, jagged crystals of ice protrude from this frigid altar. Melting ice creates pools of water that freeze once more when they reach the ground. Frosty racers emerge from this shrine.

Winds of Chaos: A low bellow of air is created as dust and debris whirl around this entranceway from the elemental chaos. Winds that are impossibly strong are centered directly on it, foretelling a horror beyond. Azure savages emerge from this shrine.

Fountain of Lava: Lava oozes out of this huge, obsidian bowl to the ground beneath, only to disappear again through mithral gates below. Incendiary vilifiers emerge from this shrine.



Sealing the Portal

Now is the time when the characters' detective work at solving the Horreb ritual cube pays off. The DM should prepare a 3-by-3 grid (or use a corner of the battlemat) to represent the side of the ritual cube. Print and cut out the nine glyphs that have been identified, and place those whose positions have been solved in their correct spots. (Alternatively, the DM could draw the solved glyphs in their places and use any unique tokens for the glyphs whose positions aren't known.)

To activate the Divine Barrier ritual stored in the cube, all nine glyphs must be placed correctly. A character can manipulate the cube as a standard action on her turn. One standard action allows a player to either place a glyph in an empty grid square or swap the positions of two glyphs. When the player's action is done, the DM points out which glyphs are in the correct slots. The correct arrangement is shown below.

When all nine glyphs are properly positioned, the cube grows warm and thrums with eldritch might from a prior age. It is ready to reseal the portal.

The ritual stored in the cube can be triggered as a standard action by the character holding the cube. It requires an Arcana or Religion skill check at DC 23.

Aiding the Players

If the players are unsure of what to do with the ritual cube and the fight is going against them, offer them hints such as, "the cube is vibrating in its pouch," or "the cube's faces are reorienting themselves randomly," or "the glyphs you've already positioned correctly are glowing weakly and the cube seems drawn to the portal."

If the skill check fails, all is not lost; the caster can try again on subsequent turns. When the skill check succeeds, five things happen.

1. The ritual cube grows intensely hot in the caster's hand before breaking from his grip and rising into the air to within a few yards of the swirling portal.

2. Mystical energy flows from the portal into the cube, which grows ever brighter until it's painful to look at it. Suddenly, the portal spews elemental debris in all directions, shrinks to a point while emitting an ear-piercing, grinding shriek, then finally, both the portal and the cube blink out of existence with a blinding flash of colorless light.

3. Pyricus immediately takes damage equal to one-half its remaining hit points.

4. Pyricus is no longer immobilized.

5. No more elementals are summoned to the battle, but those already present keep fighting.

Appendix: Adventurers' Notebook

These entries include notes which the adventurers might copy or file in the journal as they travel. Some information described here is freely given, while other entries require skill checks to acquire. Where a glyph is shown, characters learn that glyph's location on the cube when they discover the journal entry.

Journal Entries

Entry 1

Excerpt from a lengthy volume, The Great Diaspora of Netheril; Chapter Seven: Year of Hostile Badgers (-457 DR).

The arcanist Barze then led his persecuted flock away from Negarath Enclave, traveling on foot for many months beyond the eastern frontier of Netheril. As Alaphaer's first snows began to fall, the beleaguered exiles came upon a fertile dale sheltered by two great mountain ranges. There Barze founded his self-titled kingdom, and for a time the war-weary archwizard knew true happiness.

Entry 2

Excerpt from Urgund's Description of Darkness, a black-bound tome written in a strange, halting hand.

...and seated foremost in the hall of Minor Courtiers were the lesser powers: Maram of the Great Spear; Haask, Voice of Hargut; Tyranthraxus the Flamed One; Borem of the Lake of Boiling Mud; and Camnod the Unseen. These too fell down and became servants of the great lord Bane.

Entry 3

From The History of the Moonsea North, a highly colorful and often exaggerated account of the region. One excerpt in particular catches your interest.

Ten days' ride north of the Varm is a barren and dead country called the Lee-wai, land-in-pain or land-of-suffering. Further to the south this place is known as the Tortured Land. It is said to be an evil place, shunned by the Riders. They speak little of this land but yearly during Ches they make a trip into its heart. There they go to venerate the spirit of a glowing spring. This they have done for ages and so shall they do for years to come.

Entry 4

A hand-scrawled note written on the back of a shipping invoice for goods arriving in Phlan from Whitehorn, dated the fourth day of Marpenoth in the Year of Plagued Lords (1471 DR).

Stern-faced gnomes came into town today asking around about that peculiar cache of iron trade bars adventurers unearthed last tenday up in Flandal's Dell. Elder folk say the gnomes hail from Forharn, a whole community of the little buggers living beneath Kossuth's Ire. That's nonsense though, right? Who in their right mind would build a city beneath an active volcano?

Entry 5

Carefully prepared notes scribed on precious Ra-Khati vellum, uncovered in the rubble of Mantor's Library during its reconstruction in the Year of the Gate (1341 DR).

He has fooled me. All this time he has called himself Tyranthraxus the Flamed One. He exhibited his flame, and spoke of deeds attributed to Tyranthraxus. But today, while he did not know I was around, he revealed his true identity. He spoke into the great pool in his lair. I think he spoke to Lord Bane himself. And he referred to himself by his true name: Maram. Maram, he of the great spear, is also a servant of Bane.

DM's Note: This entry is a red herring meant to confuse the players. Tyranthraxus and Maram are separate entities.

Entry 6

A passage from a heretical text unearthed from the ruins of Zhentil Keep following the cyrinishad debacle in the Year of the Banner (1368 DR).

It was by the hand of one once hailed as a hero that the sorcerer-king Barze was laid low; executed silently and without a struggle. The assassin and his dour companions left the kingdom that very day; the murderers unchallenged as they passed. It was not long after that the Twisted Ones came to finish off what was left of the grieving realm.

Entry 7
An utterance from the ghost of Ferran Martinez, who haunts the old chapel of Sokol Keep:
The city fell long ago to the unblessed creatures imbued with the might of a magical pool. Chief among these were Tyranthraxus, Edranka, and Torath. With their powers they ruled and united all else, driving forward to destroy us all. The Sage Mantor worked hard to gather record of all these things, but they are lost now, his library overrun.

Entry 8
Excerpt from Heart of the Mountain, a controversial work on the origins of goliaths in the Realms.
Like all goliath tribes, the Akoro trace their ancestry back to the Golden Age of Netheril. To the Rengarth barbarians of that age, the sacred mountain range known as the Columns of the Sky were home to gods. As the fortunes of the Rengarth declined with the increasing desertification of their lands, the Rengarth began to doubt their gods.

Demanding answers, a select group was chosen to enter the sacred mountains and seek the domain of the gods. Climbing peak after peak, the seekers tackled unforgiving elements and ferocious beasts with equal skill and determination. Finally, when they had scaled the last and greatest peak, they beheld a sight which struck them dumb and thoughtless with awe.

What they saw is a matter of speculation and myth, but what is certain is that the seekers had grown taller and stronger, their flesh hard as stone, their spirits infused with primal power.

Entry 9
The Grand Historian's Records of the Arts of War. This moldering old tome is strongly moralistic, attempting to set forth the proper principals of government in times of warfare. From the crumbling pages comes the following passage:
At this time there ruling the Twisted Ones was a powerful general named Tyranthraxus. He strode before his armies cloaked in flame and led the Riders out of the Waste. At his hand the kingdom of Barze was conquered. Turning south he led his army to conquer the Horreb and the Vane. Tyranthraxus was a cruel man and leveled all that he had taken, murdering the princes of these lands. But the flame that surrounded him consumed him, destroying his body. Freed of its shell, it flew among the men of his army, lighting on each and claiming it. It was then when Baron Schodt imprisoned Tyranthraxus in a vial of water which shone like the light of day. This he sank in the watery depths of Lake Longreach, thus defeating the armies Tyranthraxus had raised.

Entry 10
Etched upon a mausoleum wall within Valhingen Graveward:
The necromancer was the most reserved of the three dark heroes, a gangling man of advancing years, speaking in a high whisper and largely keeping to himself. His emaciated form was shrouded within dark robes, the man's cold eyes bespoke of malign intelligence and eldritch might. His given name: Myrkul Bey al-Kursi, Crown Prince of Murghôm.

Entry 11
A tattered parchment fragment, its lettering worn and barely legible:
...and there on blood-soaked fields of Grong-Haap, Edranka's goblin armies were swept away by Hargut of the Gray Pestilence.

Entry 12
Testimony given under pain of death by Hatemaster Ansgar Theoderich at the Lyceum of the Black Hand:
This glyph is the archaic holy symbol of Bane, from the time before the Avatar Crisis. The priests of the Lyceum of the Black Lord in Phlan subscribe to the heresy that Bane was utterly destroyed by Torm during the Time of Troubles. The being they worship as Bane today, the heretical priests say, is in fact none other than the Godson of Bane, Iyachtu Xvim, having adopted his father's name to more quickly achieve the status and power of a greater god.

Entry 13
Old tavern tale spread by inebriated patrons of the Bitter Blade. In recent years the rumor has been adopted by parents at their wits' end to convince young children to do their chores.
Buccaneers operate a slave auction out of a hidden camp near Stormy Bay.

Entry 14

Passage from Legacy of Ostoria, a treatise penned by Sage Archembald of Yûlash and published in the Year of the Empty Goblet (1252 DR).

When the jotunbrud retreated into the Abbey Mountains in the final days of the Age of Dragons, the stone giants had grudgingly abandoned Moch-Fanan, a mighty citadel of rune-etched iron built near a great bridge spanning the icy Pelvuria River. For millennia the keep had served the giants well, guarding the trade crossing into the realm's southern border.

It was not long before opportunistic scavengers took up residence in the citadel and claimed the region as their own. Known as Gnolls, these tyrannical creatures soon began construction of a settlement centered on the giant keep and the nearby bridge. In time bards began to sing of "Frozen Flindyke," the fabled city of beast-men at the heart of the Tortured Lands.

Entry 15

A tightly bound scroll, seemingly immune to the ravages of time.

Early Phlan was a trading outpost, established to facilitate commerce between the elves of Myth Drannor, the dwarves of the Dragonspine Mountains, and the primitive human tribes of Thar and the Ride. It was at this time that the fey planted the Quivering Forest north of the city; the copse enchanted to grow the great wood in the span of a human generation.

Entry 16

Two chaps conversing over ale at the Laughing Goblin:

My cousin in Hillsfar says undead roam freely in the western Dalelands, along with malicious fey and creatures spawned of shadow. I'd wager ten crowns those terrors were released by the Empire of Netheril!

Entry 17

From the scribblings of Gaylyn Dimswart Wyvernspur, Sage Most Learned of the Royal Court of Cormyr, in the Year of the Halls Unhaunted (1407 DR).

New evidence supports my theory that the Barbarians of the Ride are the product of a mingling between two ancient peoples: the Rengarth tribes of Netheril and the remnants of an even older civilization of man that fell into ruin during the First Flowering. The oral traditions of one tribe in particular, the Varm, bespeak of direct descendancy from the founders of the Citadel of the Raven and its fabled progenitor culture.

Entry 18

Spoken by a guard of the Black Watch stationed at Traitor's Gate in Phlan:

You might wonder at this gate's odd name; many do. It was named after a lost scion of House Cadorna, Porphrys. Nearly a century and a half ago, Porphrys advanced to rule the city council, and many respected and trusted him. But he had been possessed by the spirit of fire, and later was driven from the city by heroes quite like yourselves.

Entry 19

A warning provided by Knight Commander Ector Brahms, while taking a short rest just outside the Quivering Forest:

Smart folk don't go into that wood. A century back, when the Netherese razed Zhentil Keep and threatened to do the same to Phlan, Lord Cvaal Daoran, grandfather of the current Lord Protector, made a pact with the dark fey of the Quivering Forest. In exchange for their aid, the wee folk demanded the forest remain off limits to travel and timber cutting.

Our last Lord Protector learned the hard way that the agreement was still being enforced, when he sent loggers into the wood in 1456. Lord Talaric Daoran went missing from Valjevo Castle the following day, never to be seen again.

About the Authors

Brian R. James is a freelance game designer living in the Seattle area. His works include *The Grand History of the Realms*™, Forgotten Realms® *Campaign Guide*, *Open Grave: Secrets of the Undead*™, Dragon *Magazine Annual* and *Underdark*™. Follow Brian online at www.twitter.com/brianrjames.

Matt James is a disabled combat veteran, having earned a Bronze Star and Purple Heart from his recent service in the United States Army. When not exploring the fantasy worlds of Dungeons & Dragons®, he enjoys spending quality time with his wife Dawn and two Chihuahuas, Peanut and Sammy. Follow Matt online at www.twitter.com/matt_james_fr.

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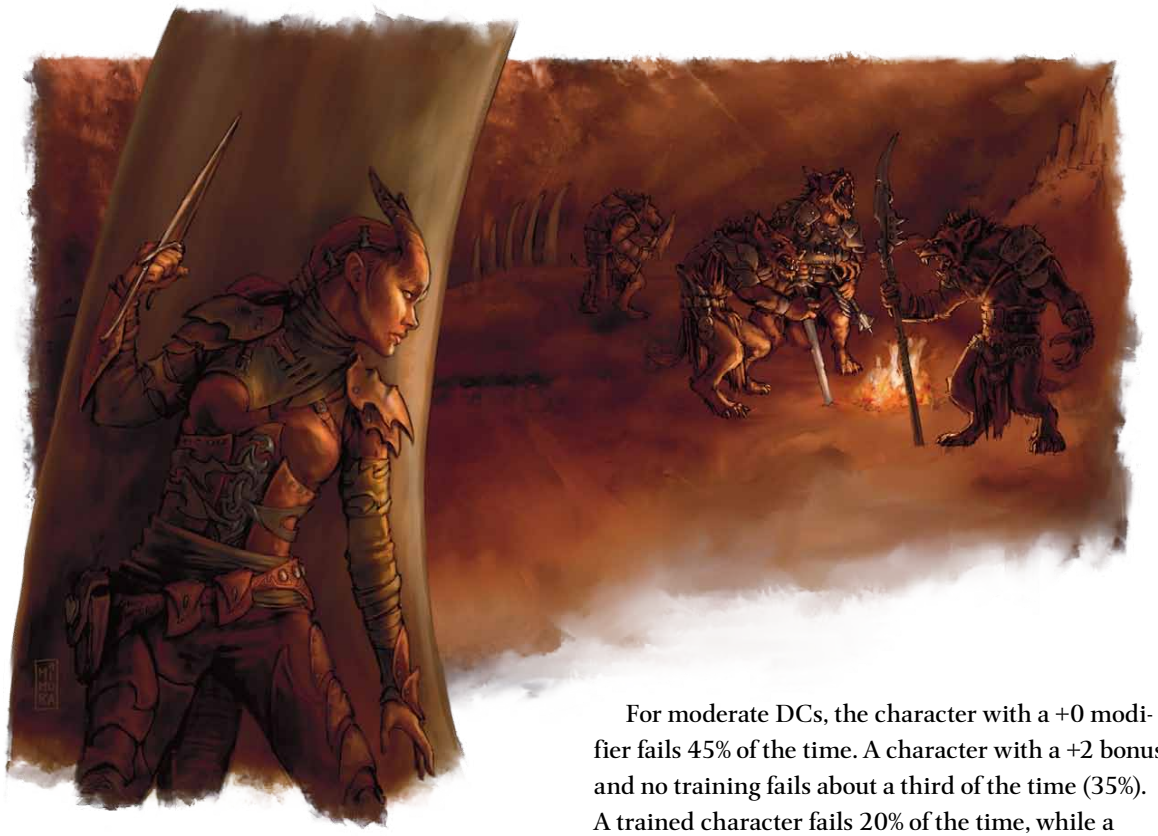
The Math Behind the DCs

by Mike Mearls
Illustration by Raven Mimura



It's hard to believe that this column is on top of its first anniversary! Over the past year, we've looked at the basics of skill challenges, explored a number of samples, and focused on a few broad types of challenges.

First, to cap off a year of skill challenges, I'd like next month to serve as a question-and-answer column. Fire away with your queries; I'll collect them and answer as many as possible in next month's installment.

For this month, let's look at the single topic that provokes the most questions in terms of skill challenge mechanics: Skill DCs.

The Math Behind the DCs

The standard DCs for levels 1-3, after errata, are:
Easy: 5
Moderate: 10
Hard: 15

If you're like a lot of D&D players, those seem a little low to you. The key is, though, to understand why they sit where they do. The following examples all assume a 1st-level character.

The easy DCs are meant to represent trivial tasks, the sort that rarely go wrong but could. We aimed for an untrained character with no particular aptitude (+0 or a penalty in the appropriate ability score) to fail about 20% of the time. A trained character succeeds automatically.

For moderate DCs, the character with a +0 modifier fails 45% of the time. A character with a +2 bonus and no training fails about a third of the time (35%). A trained character fails 20% of the time, while a trained character with a +2 to +4 stat mod looks at 15% to zero chance of failure.

Finally, for the hard DC, our +0 character stares at a 70% chance of failure. Training brings that down to 45%, and a half-decent stat slashes it down further to a 35% failure, or 60% for the untrained character.

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The really interesting case here is the super-competent character. That character has training (+5), a good stat (+3), a +2 bonus from race or background, and maybe another +2 (or so) from a feat or magic item. That PC fails the hardest check 15% of the time. Not bad, is it?

All this math is to illustrate an important principle: The DCs are aimed at the character who might have training and a +2 stat bonus, and at PCs who made no effort to improve a skill. If a PC really wants to maximize a skill, the system lets him show off his mastery by blasting through the DCs with ease. By spending those feats, training in a skill, and picking a combination of race, background, class, and so forth to maximize a skill, the character is a master compared to other PCs.

Of course, that does lead to a problem in D&D. Mastery is kind of boring. That's why people climb Mount Everest. You could walk up and down that steep hill near your house, but if you're an expert mountain climber, you want to challenge yourself with more difficult goals.

On a related note, this same problem crops up if the entire party throws itself at a skill challenge. The guy with the big-league skill bonus makes the check, backed by a +4 or +6 bonus from various aid another attempts.

CHALLENGING THE PRODIGIES

It's fun to automatically succeed at some checks. When the party must climb a rock wall to escape an onrushing herd of dinosaurs, the barbarian swings from ledge to ledge while the gnome wizard huffs and puffs as he pulls himself up. When the entire party must make a skill check, the PC with a huge bonus feels special. He excels while other characters struggle to succeed.

Sometimes, though, you need to challenge a character who can blow away the typical check. The key lies in challenging that character without leaving the rest of the party helpless. A character with a fantastic Athletics modifier can leap over a burning chasm, but the rest of the party tumbles to their deaths!

It's best to challenge the lone PC with a skill check that only he has to worry about. If the entire party faces a check, that's the chance for that character to shine.

SKILL CHALLENGES

Not every skill check in a challenge needs to be created equal. The DCs at a given level are a guideline for the entire party, but there's no need to use them across the board.

The easiest way to challenge a PC with a high skill check is to increase that skill's DC in a challenge. Make sure, however, that the elevated DC is not the only way to overcome the challenge. A good skill challenge involves the entire group. In this case, you're building a specific check for that one character because a skill challenge should have some option for everyone in the party. The guy who knows that he's going to succeed no matter what is as bored (and maybe even frustrated) as the PC who knows that he can't succeed.

As a rule of thumb, you can increase the DC at a given level and difficulty by 10 to give a highly competent PC the same success rate as an untrained PC with no modifier. That's a rough approximation -- you might need to vary that modifier from +6 to +12.

With a higher DC comes two challenges. First, you need to make it clear that the skill check is much more difficult than the other options. That's where your ability to describe a scene becomes important. For example, the lock in question might be a rare, intricate object from the City of Brass that makes a Thievery check nearly impossible. Such a description not only flags the check as difficult, it also lets a character shine. After you describe a lock as nearly impossible to pick, it's all the more impressive for the rogue to open it with just a few seconds of work.

With a higher DC should come a higher reward. A successful check might grant the rest of the party a bonus on some other check, a clue for figuring out another part of the adventure, or an advantage in another part of the session. For example, in the skill challenge to sneak into the sultan's palace, you decide to set an ultra-hard Bluff DC. To make the check, the PC must talk to the guards. Failure leads to his arrest -- but if he succeeds, the guards mistake him for a visiting dignitary. Later, when the sultan's secret police pursue the PCs through the palace, the guards leap to help protect "the ambassador."

An elevated DC is a great excuse to add this type of flavor and continuing benefits to a skill challenge. Even if the challenge ultimately fails, you can still give the PC a smaller reward for his own successes within it.

TACTICAL CHALLENGES

The characters battle a hydra deep within a dungeon ruin. Above the chamber sits a platform that hangs from the ceiling by chains. If the PCs can reach the platform, they can attack the hydra from above, out of its reach. However, the Athletics check to reach the platform is so high that only one PC has a chance to succeed. On a failure, the PC risks landing right next to the ferocious beast.

In this case, you can tempt the PCs with critical, tactical advantages in combat. With an elevated DC, only a single PC (or perhaps a character using a power or magic item to boost his check) can take advantage of it.

The great thing about this approach is that the party doesn't need the advantage, but if they can win it, the PC with the high bonus has a chance to show off a bit.

You don't need to use this approach often, but every once in a while it serves to give a character the chance to grab the spotlight.

MINION CHECKS

The characters race through the ruins as the dragon roars above them. As they round the corner, they find what must be the last, intact building in town. As luck would have it, the door's locked! The party's rogue rushes to the front, pulls out his tools, and goes to work. In a moment, the door is open and the party ducks under cover.

This approach is a variant on the skill challenge idea given above. Rather than set aside a separate skill check for one character, instead spice up your challenges with the skill check equivalent of a minion. Like a minion, this skill challenge option goes down in one check. Unlike a minion, it's a bit harder to "hit" than the typical check.

The idea is simple: At some point during the skill challenge, the PCs must make a very difficult check with a skill that might not normally be part of the challenge. Beating the check earns them one success, and missing it is one failure. Whether they succeed or fail, the challenge continues on.

In essence, the challenge becomes the active agent in opposing the PCs. It throws an obstacle at them that they must respond to in order to continue making progress. This check is the perfect chance to give a PC a chance to show off (or fail miserably in front of the entire group).

In design terms, treat each such barrier as a minion of the same level as your challenge and award XP as appropriate. This approach lets you throw an appropriate challenge at a skilled PC without leaving the rest of the party helpless. It's also a good way to use such a skill without making it the primary part of a challenge.

You can also use minion checks outside of a skill challenge. In essence, the minion check is a skill challenge that the PC passes with one success or fails with one missed check. Use the hard DC for a given level with a +10 modifier. As with the standard skill challenge, be sure to take into account success and failure for keeping the action moving. Neither should bring the adventure to a halt.

UNTIL NEXT TIME

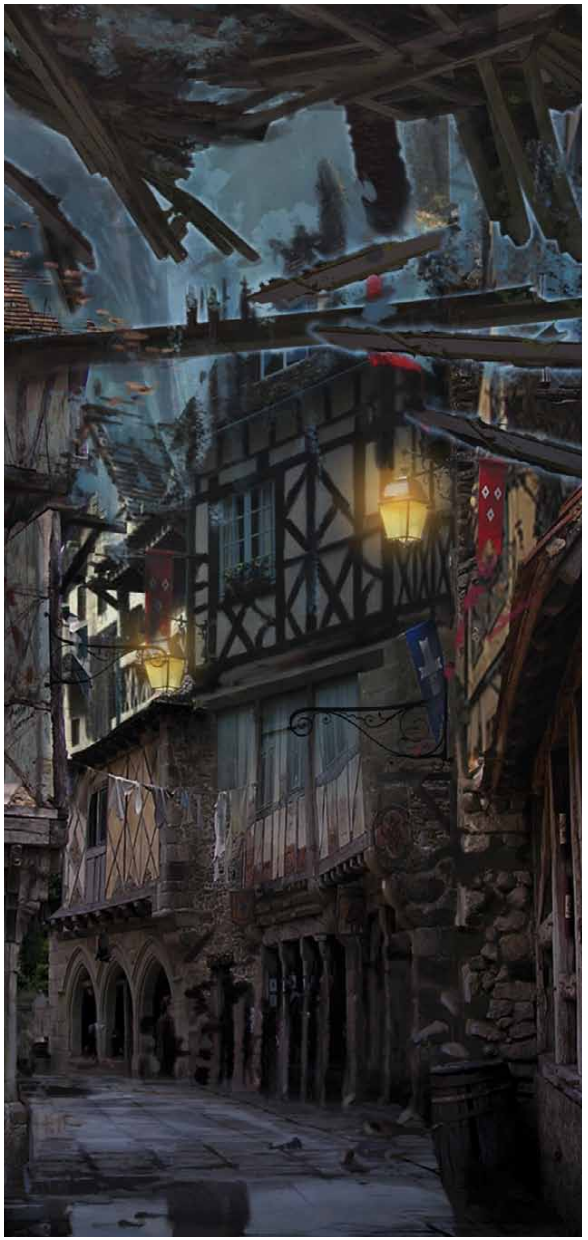
Remember that the next installment in this series is a question and answer column. We can't have any answers without questions, so be sure to get yours in!

About the Author

Mike Mearls is the Lead Developer for the **Dungeons & Dragons** roleplaying game. His recent credits include H1: *Keep on the Shadowfell and Player's Handbook II* (v.3.5).

Save My Game
Long Time No Game

BY STEPHEN RADNEY-MACFARLAND
illustration by Rob Alexander



Summer can be a game killer, even here at the Wizards of Coast offices. The allure of fair weather and sunny skies (the latter is virtually gold in the Pacific Northwest) can find even the most dedicated gamer discarding their dice bag and minis for sandals and shorts. It can be even worse if you're in school, especially if your group is used to meeting in the student union or over the lunch break. After a long stretch of summer (or winter, or spring break), game details become blurred. Players come up with new killer character ideas (sometimes spurred on by a new D&D book or D&D Insider article). DMs dream of running a game in that new campaign setting. Or, sadly, you find that the player whose character was crucial to the current plot has moved away. A frustrated Dungeon Master might find all the work he did over the break quickly made moot, or a player coming back ready to continue the adventures of his favorite character may find a DM with a brand new shiny.

This month we are going to explore some strategies for keeping games going through long or frequent breaks. It's no coincidence that I recently found myself in the same boat. Both of my Days of Long Shadows games have suffered long hiatuses because of summer vacations, wedding plans, long holiday weekends, or just gorgeous sunny days. As part of this month's advice, I'll share with you where I've gone right and wrong this summer. Hopefully you can learn from both my success and my mistakes.

Planning the Break

If I had my druthers, I would always be on top of it and organized enough to plan the breaks. To be honest, it doesn't happen nearly as often as I would like. In fact, this summer I had a strange mix of good break-planning and missed games popping up out of the blue. The following are some tricks to maximize your planning.

In theory, planning the break is easiest to do when you're in school or your schedule is affected by that tyke or two in school. The breaks are scheduled and on your calendar already. It can still sneak up on you, though. Try to wrap things up a week or so

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before the scheduled break. End-of-the-semester projects, papers, and mid-term or final exams are de facto early starts to your break. While you may be able to make the time (whether you ought to or not), there will be at least a couple of people in your group reminding you how crazy it is to game during finals week. Sometimes it'll be your kids asking for help on their final projects.

For those of us who are out of school (or who lost their semester calendars), the nuances of break planning make things a bit trickier. The first thing to do is keep in mind the number of potential hot spots throughout the year. They include:

- ✦ **Winter holidays**
- ✦ **Spring holidays**
- ✦ **The entirety of summer**
- ✦ **Birthdays**
- ✦ **Anniversaries**
- ✦ **Mother's Day and Father's Day**
- ✦ **Three-day weekends**

It's always good to mark these on your calendar, for both you and your players. This doesn't mean you need to take out the calendar and make the definitive session list for the year; just have them in as a reminder for each session, and then make sure to regularly talk about the schedule. While some players may think it's great to play on their birthday or on Father's Day, families tend to have other plans. It's good to have the conversation early rather than a couple of days before the game. If you can, you may want to have one of the players act as master of the calendar. I particularly like this because it is one less thing that I'm responsible for, so I can keep my focus on the game.

These unexpected breaks can be frustrating when they happen, but the real pitfall is the first session coming back from an unexpected break.

Once you're aware of breaks, try to use that knowledge in your adventure and encounter design. I like to plan encounters that either present cliffhangers or downtime based on the length of the break. Cliffhangers tend to work better when the break is shorter – when you're only missing a session of two – as it drives anticipation and excitement for the next game. Downtime is better for the long haul; I'll get to why in a moment.

SURPRISE — A BREAK!

More often than not, either because you didn't have the foresight to plan a break or the terrible drudgeries of the real world collude against your fun, a break in sessions just happens. You fall ill, an opportunity pops up, or someone gets grounded; the reasons are legion. These unexpected breaks can be frustrating when they happen, but the real pitfall is the first session coming back from an unexpected break.

Restarts are awkward. Compound that with the fact that time blurs memory, and the first half-hour or so of your return session will be taken up with players struggling to remember what dailies they had left, whether they'd spent an action point, and whether they opened the huge double doors at the end of that chapel to Vecna. There are things that you can do at the beginning and end of every session to minimize the impact of these unexpected breaks.

First, keep a session journal. This doesn't need to be elaborate. I start mine with a line that has the date, tracking for campaign time by the day followed by a list of challenges defeated (and XP gained), the treasure I gave out, where the characters are sitting in milestone progression, and quotes or notes I think are funny, important for the campaign's story, or just plain fun. These are rough lists jotted down during play that I flesh out later during my next session planning into something approaching a true journal. The idea of the journal is not to get every detail, but enough so I will have a clear idea of what happened during the last session when the next one starts, be that next week or next month. During both expected and unexpected downtimes, I come back to this journal once a week during my regular game planning and annotate it for upcoming sessions. I'll review the annotated version just before the game starts, so it's fresh in my mind when everyone comes to the table. When the questions come, I'm prepared.

Second, remind your players to write down what powers they've used and other important character details. Lately, after a couple of session starts with players staring intently at their character sheets hoping it will sprout lips and remind them whether or not they spent that magic item daily, I considered

making my own notes. You can go too far with session note taking, however. DMs have enough to do during a game, and they need to offload that work to the players wherever they can. I needed something less active on my part that would still get the job done. With that in mind, I made 3x5 cards to give to each player during the session. At the end of the session, they write down what daily powers they've spent, their current hit points, number of healing surges, and action points. I'll keep them with my initiative cards and hand them out at the start of each game. Here's the first draft of my cards.

ENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

I mentioned earlier that when I have the foresight to plan for long breaks, I prefer to have them take place before a section of downtime. I have a couple of reasons for this. First, it comes from my younger days when I moved around a good deal. Parents in the military or with government jobs can be hell on campaigns. I had to move just after my freshman year of high school, just as my D&D group were about to enter the Elemental Nodes of the Temple of Elemental Evil. I was bummed, but I ended the first upper temple adventure in such a climactic way that my friends thought the campaign was over. Sometimes long breaks can be the end of the campaign, especially with players or a DM in their early teens. Trying to wrap up story threads before long breaks may just be insurance that your campaign still feels fulfilling, even it ends prematurely.

Trying to wrap up story threads before long breaks may just be insurance that your campaign still feels fulfilling, even it ends prematurely.

My last suggestion for smooth break transitions is one I learned from playing a number of lunch games here at Wizards of the Coast. Though you may be tempted, when your combat is running a little long and someone needs a meeting room for legitimate work, you can't really tell your coworkers to go bug off. You also don't want to just abandon the action. And that's where the joy of technology comes in. Take a snapshot of the play mat with your cell phone camera and retain your notes on the initiative order and its placements. Have each of your players note what effects they have, do the same for the monsters, and in mere seconds, you can wrap up the session and have everything you need to start the next one in medias res.

There is another reason to do this – one that doesn't involve the cold realism of early campaign death. If your group is into it, and you have the time, downtime activity is a perfect opportunity for some freeform roleplaying via email or campaign message boards. This gives you a chance to engage in small adventures, maybe nothing more rigorous than a skill challenge. It allows your players to explore your world and enrich their character's backgrounds on an individual or small group basis. Doing this also keeps them engaged and thinking about the campaign during long stretches without play sessions. You'll find you have less to remind them about when they finally come face to face at the game table again.

Good luck with your breaks. I hope that some of this advice will help minimize their impact. On to the mailbag ...

WHY WON'T HE TELL ME IT'S OVER?

I'm writing because I'm in this campaign that has not met in a long time. By a long time, I mean months. In fact, we've only played three sessions before this long hiatus. I've talked to the DM a few times and asked him if the campaign is over or what, but he insists he is going to start it again when he has the time. Every Saturday I find myself wanting to play D&D, but I'm not looking for a new group because I feel like I've made a commitment to this DM. Am I just being a chump?

–When Should I let Go Will

You're not being a chump; your DM is. I'm being a tad harsh, though. I'm not totally unsympathetic to his plight. Campaigns are hard to let go of for any DM. It seems this DM is invested in the idea of his campaign, even though he obviously doesn't have time to actually run it. If I were you, I would have a talk with him. Tell him that you enjoyed the sessions you played, but you are moving on. You want to play

D&D, and it seems obvious he doesn't have the time to run a game right now.

The next part is a little harder. Many times, when you confront someone like this, they will make an effort to run a game or two. If they are still busy – which is likely – you end up in the same boat at the end of those sessions that you are in now. Don't be tempted to come back unless he starts running the game regularly. I think you'll be much happier playing in a stable game rather than waiting for the one who just can't commit.

I'm still talking about games, right? Weird.

PERSONAL SPACE IN A FANTASY WORLD

There's a player in my game who will not leave me alone. When I see him in the halls, he asks me a question about the game. He sends me a constant stream of emails and text talking about his character, the game, or things in the Forgotten Realms (the campaign world my game is set in). I love D&D and the Realms too, but this guy needs to stop. How do I let him down easy? How do I get him to stop?

–Harassed Harold

First, you should treat his constant pestering as a compliment. He is obviously enjoying your game and engaged by your story and take on the Forgotten Realms. It doesn't make his actions any less annoying, though. I suggest taking his fervor and free time and putting it toward something useful. Have him create a campaign wiki or moderate a message board where you and the other players can communicate about the game. If he doesn't know how to do that, learning can occupy his seemingly boundless energy, at least for a while. With that done, set the ground rules for extracurricular questions. Limit him to a small number a day or even a week. That will help him focus his questions and give you some breathing room.

TOO MANY TOYS

Help! Minis and tiles are taking over my game shelf. Try as I may, I just can't get my toys under control. How do you guys manage your tiles and your miniatures? I really need to know.

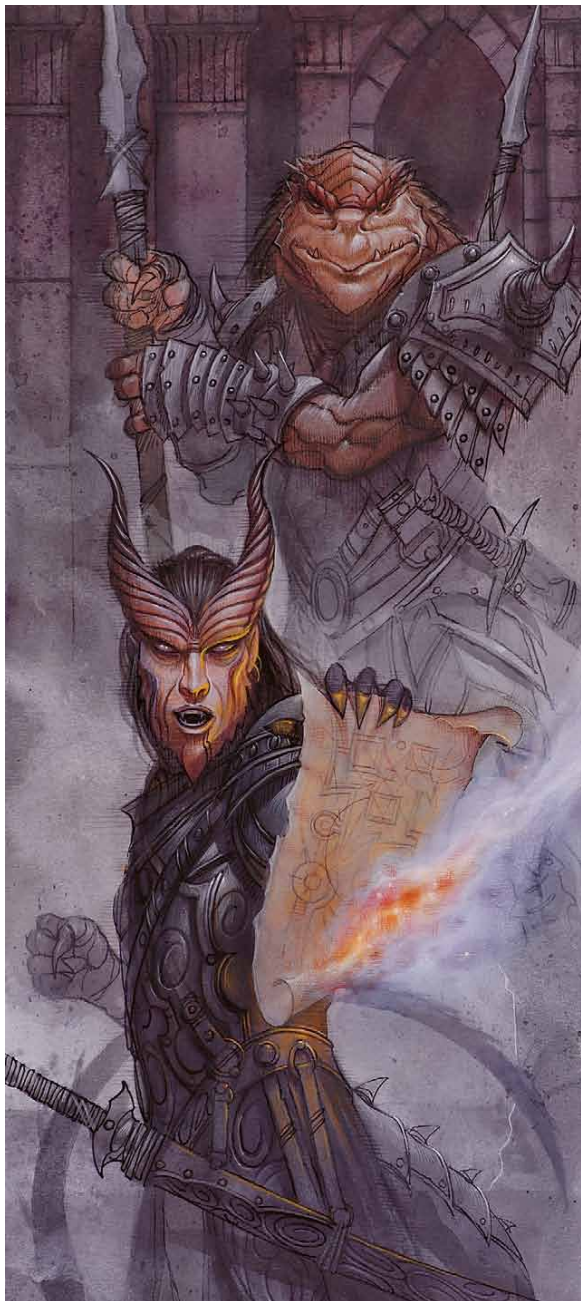
–Piles of Fun Paul

Wow, there are more methods than I can mention in a short reply. Hold tight, next month I'll devote an entire column to keeping your toys organized and out of your way ... at least until you need them.

About the Author

Born on a stormy Christmas day, in our nation's capital, during the Nixon administration, the stars were definitely wrong when **Stephen Radney-MacFarland** came screaming into the world. Spending most of his impressionable years as a vagabond and ne're-do-well, Stephen eventually settled in the Northwest to waste his life on roleplaying games. Once that RPGA guy, Stephen is now a developer in RPG R&D where he doesn't create the traps... he just makes them deadlier. He also teaches a class on roleplaying design for the Art Institute of Seattle, molding the minds of young and upcoming designers. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

Episode 19: Tiers of Play



BY JAMES WYATT
illustration by Wayne England

I've been talking a lot about Dungeon Master's Guide 2 this week, including two interviews you might have seen or heard around the web at Newbie DM and The Tome. Since it's fresh in my mind, this seems like a good time to run through the book and apply what's inside to my Greenbrier game. After that, I'll take a page from the DMG2 and look at how I expect my campaign to change once the characters reach paragon level (even though they're only level 3 right now!).

DMG2 Run-Through

The fun thing about flipping through *DMG2* is that I've already incorporated a lot of what it includes into my campaign.

Chapter 1: Group Storytelling. When I launched this campaign, I was trying to incorporate some of the storytelling techniques and advice presented in this chapter. I asked the players to describe their own origins and backgrounds and expanded my map based on a couple of the players' descriptions of a dwarven nearby stronghold. I placed a couple of roleplaying hooks (as originally described in Stephen Radney-MacFarland's Save My Game column) in my campaign handout.

That said, my campaign is not one that's really driven by the characters' goals and motivations — that's why I have a campaign arc sketched out. The characters might provide subplots, but they're basically following my directions at this point. What's more, a lunchtime game that meets for one to two hours a week is not especially conducive to high drama or roleplaying vignettes.

Looking again at "What Your Players Want" in this chapter, though, I'm thinking I might put together a survey for my players so they can more easily help me tailor the campaign to their needs and desires. And I might use the new Wizards Community features to give them a forum where we can do some of that storytelling and roleplaying away from the table. Maybe that's the place where I can finally get them to tell me about their near-death experiences in youth, which I'll tie to the Kindred of the Shattered Gate.

Chapter 2: Advanced Encounters. There's a lot of really down-to-earth advice for encounter building in this chapter, including material that I've been trying to work into my campaign — things like circular paths, fantastic terrain (I used a fey circle in my game last week), terrain powers, and interesting traps.

The terrain powers have been fun — I need to find ways to better communicate to the players that they can use the terrain to pull off the same tricks that the monsters are using against them. I went so far in my game last week as to gently encourage Grimbold to teleport through the fey circle (which was actually just a giant toadstool in an encounter with some myconids), but when some goblins used magic pillars to blast them with lightning a few weeks ago, the players never considered trying the same trick.

The key element of this chapter is the idea of encounters as story elements — discrete scenes in a larger narrative, with a history, an objective, and a significant outcome. That's an area I want to work on more, particularly because of the lunchtime setting of our game. When we get together and only get through one combat encounter, I think it would be helpful if that encounter felt more significant in the overall story of the game, if it felt more like a scene in a play or movie. As it stands, you need to look at a bunch of encounters in sequence to get a sense of that story. Even now, when the players are in the midst of one of the three-encounter delves I came up with last month, the minimal story of that delve only unfolds over the course of those three encounters. I want to think about how I can make each encounter stand more on its own.

The encounters I've designed that incorporate skill challenges to reconsecrate the divine altars scattered throughout the chasm are my best examples so far of encounters that have a clear objective and that come close to telling a story on their own. I want to do more of that.

Chapter 3: Skill Challenges. So far, I've run three skill challenges in this campaign — two involving those altars and one dealing with the briar haunt that accompanied them on their first foray into the chasm. I was pretty happy with the first reconsecration challenge, even though Oskar did most of the heavy lifting in completing the challenge while the rest of the party fought the monsters. That worked all right, because Oskar was contributing to the fight by dealing damage to the fell taints with each successful skill check. (The second time, I also made his successful checks turn off the fell taints' insubstantiality for a round.) Still, the challenges were a little unsatisfying because they seemed to devolve into Oskar making the same skill check round after round.

One key will be to require successful checks with one or more skills that Oskar's no good at.

The next time the characters find an altar (which should be this Friday, if we play this week), I can build a more elaborate skill challenge. One key will be to require successful checks with one or more skills that Oskar's no good at. While Oskar's working with Religion or Dungeoneering, somebody else could be making Athletics or even Diplomacy checks for some reason. I'll work on that, using *DMG2's* advice, and report back next month.

I'd also like to explore more ground with skill challenges in the campaign, and perhaps craft a challenge to represent a broader stretch of game time. I could see doing an "explore the ruins" challenge when the characters get to Tower Watch, and certainly in Lake Town there'll be ample opportunity for challenges that revolve around interaction.

Chapter 4: Customizing Monsters. Almost a year ago, I alluded to a "nifty new tool" in *DMG2*, something I could use to help me flesh out cultists of Those Who Hear. I was referring to the monster themes that appear in this chapter, and specifically to the theme we ended up calling Those Who Hear. Themes are really similar to the way I took powers from the foulspawn in the **Monster Manual** and applied them to goblins and kobolds in Episode 10. They're a really simple tool I can use, in this case, to give the flavor of aberration-worshiping madness to any monster I want to use in this campaign.

I don't want to overuse this one theme, but I'm laying the groundwork for it now by including a lot of aberrant monsters that have a similar flavor. Each of the three delves I designed using my "building-block adventure" technique from last month has an aberrant boss at the end — a beholder gauth, a grick, and a pair of dimensional marauders. I'll use the Those Who Hear theme to make the human cultists in Lake Town, and maybe the leader of the orcs in Tower Watch, feel linked to each other and evoke that feel of Far Realm madness.

Chapter 5: Adventures. I'm making good use of alternative rewards in my campaign already. Oskar acquired a divine boon (Ioun's revelation) as his reward for cleansing his deity's altar. I've also given out two magic items in such a way that they felt more like divine (or primal) blessings. First the sword that Uldane found, which he was convinced was a holy avenger, started to glow and became a sunblade. Then Turuk, in the middle of a fight, found vines growing up and around him as his leather armor turned into lifevine armor. I'm trying to make magic items feel special in my game — not just objects lying around in the room when the monsters are gone,

but a reflection of the heroic destiny of the player characters.

A natural extension of that approach might be to introduce an artifact into the campaign, which is the subject of this chapter's next section. The first *Dungeon Master's Guide* suggests that an artifact might remain in a character's (or party's) possession for one to three levels. Maybe I could introduce some ancient artifact of the Elder Elves in Lake Town – perhaps something in the possession of the cult leader there – and use it to draw the characters to Cendriane about three levels later. A different artifact might help drive the action while the characters are in Firestorm Peak, and perhaps I could explore something for the high epic tier as well - maybe a weapon that the characters can use against the Speaker in Dreams. None of the artifacts in *DMG2* seems especially appropriate for use here, but my *next* campaign will totally involve the Rod of Seven Parts...

Rather than spend much time talking about the campaign arcs that round out this chapter or Chapter 6: Paragon Campaigns, I want to move into talking about the paragon tier of my campaign arc and how I expect that to be different from the heroic and epic tiers.

Paragon Greenbrier

Here's the paragon-tier section of my campaign arc as it stands:

- Levels 11–12: Visit Cendriane in the Feywild, learn more about the Elder Elves. Also A Darkness Gathering adventure?
- Levels 12–13: Harrows Pass (probably just a single adventure) – emerge into the Skins, outside Gloomwrought (in the Shadowfell). Connection between keepers and Keepers?
- Levels 14–20: The Gates of Firestorm Peak.

So the tier starts off with the characters' first excursion into another plane of existence. From there, they go quickly to the Shadowfell, and then spend most of the tier exploring the caverns of Firestorm Peak that exist in all three planes. That's certainly a dramatic change from the very parochial adventures of the heroic tier, where they wander only as far as Lake Town and then return to their home village. Those expanded horizons are a good hallmark of the paragon experience, so I'm satisfied with that aspect of this outline.

The stakes should feel higher as well. Right now, they're dealing with threats to the village. Their adventures in Tower Watch and Lake Town have a similar scope: deal with dangers that threaten local communities. When they return to Greenbrier Chasm at the end of heroic tier, I hope they'll be aware that it's not just about saving the village any more. Once they get into Firestorm Peak, it will eventually become clear that the fate of the world itself is in their hands. If Madreus's portal to the Far Realm is allowed to remain in place, the alien entities that rule that distant plane will destroy all life on the world the characters call home.

One of the things that contributes to the characters' awareness of higher stakes is giving them a bigger role in the world. I had already planned to introduce some of the organizations from Lords of Madness at the top of the heroic tier. Assuming the characters join one or more of those organizations, I can use those connections to root them more firmly in what's going on in the world. Organization members can give the characters a larger perspective about the dangers they face. And I can use some of the advice in Chapter 5 of the *DMG2* to introduce politics, power struggles, and even schisms within those organizations to complicate the characters' lives.

All in all, I'm satisfied that the paragon tier of my campaign arc works to broaden the characters' horizons, let them feel like a more important and significant part of the world, and present them with greater challenges and higher stakes than they faced in the heroic tier. I'm thinking about ways I might be able to incorporate politics and war, long Underdark treks, or time travel into my outline, based on the material in Chapter 6 of the *DMG2*, but nothing is coming to mind just yet.

The Idea File

It's not on store shelves yet, but I got an early copy of *Primal Power* the other day and made a note to think about the role of the primal spirits in binding the Speaker in Dreams beneath Greenbrier Chasm. So far, the characters have been dealing exclusively with divine altars, but there should be primal rites they (particularly Turuk and Nordil) can perform to help cleanse the chasm as well.

And what I said before about using the Rod of Seven Parts in my next campaign definitely goes in the idea file.

About the Author

James Wyatt is the D&D® Design Manager for Wizards of the Coast Roleplaying R&D. He was one of the lead designers for 4th Edition D&D and the primary author of the 4th Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*®. He was one of the designers of the *Eberron*® *Campaign Setting* and is the author of several *Eberron* novels.